





THREE ADDRESSES

ON THE

Relations Subsisting between the White
and Colored People of the
United States,

BY

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

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IN LOUISVILLE, KY., 1883.

The following was delivered by FREDERICK DOUGLASS as an address to the people of the United States at a Convention of Colored Men held in Louisville, Ky., September 24, 1883 :

FELLOW-CITIZENS : Charged with the responsibility and duty of doing what we may to advance the interest and promote the general welfare of a people lately enslaved, and who, though now free, still suffer many of the disadvantages and evils derived from their former condition, not the least among which is the low and unjust estimate entertained of their abilities and possibilities as men, and their value as citizens of the Republic ; instructed by these people to make such representations and adopt such measures as in our judgment may help to bring about a better understanding and a more friendly feeling between themselves and their white fellow-citizens, recognizing the great fact as we do, that the relations of the American people and those of civilized nations generally depend more upon prevailing ideas, opinions, and long established usages for their qualities of good and evil than upon courts of law or creeds of religion. Allowing the existence of a magnanimous disposition on your part to listen candidly to an honest appeal for fair play, coming from any class of your fellow-citizens, however humble, who may have, or may think they have, rights to assert or wrongs to redress, the members of this National Convention, chosen from all parts of the United States, representing the thoughts, feelings and purposes of colored men generally, would, as one means of advancing the cause committed to them, most respectfully and earnestly ask your attention and favorable consideration to the matters contained in the present paper.

At the outset we very cordially congratulate you upon the altered condition both of ourselves and our common country. Especially do we congratulate you upon the fact that a great reproach, which for two centuries rested on the good name of your country, has been blotted out ; that chattel slavery is no longer the burden of the colored man's complaint, and that we now come to rattle no chains, to clank no fetters, to paint no horrors of the old plantation to shock your sensi-

bilities, to humble your pride, excite your pity, or to kindle your indignation. We rejoice also that one of the results of this stupendous revolution in our national history, the Republic which was before divided and weakened between two hostile and irreconcilable interests, has become united and strong; that from a low plain of life, which bordered upon barbarism, it has risen to the possibility of the highest civilization; that this change has started the American Republic on a new departure, full of promise, although it has also brought you and ourselves face to face with problems novel and difficult, destined to impose upon us responsibilities and duties, which, plainly enough, will tax our highest mental and moral ability for their happy solution.

Born on American soil in common with yourselves, deriving our bodies and our minds from its dust, centuries having passed away since our ancestors were torn from the shores of Africa, we, like yourselves, hold ourselves to be in every sense Americans, and that we may, therefore, venture to speak to you in a tone not lower than that which becomes earnest men and American citizens. Having watered your soil with our tears, enriched it with our blood, performed its roughest labor in time of peace, defended it against enemies in time of war, and at all times been loyal and true to its best interests, we deem it no arrogance or presumption to manifest now a common concern with you for its welfare, prosperity, honor and glory.

If the claim thus set up by us be admitted, as we think it ought to be, it may be asked, what propriety or necessity can there be for the Convention, of which we are members? and why are we now addressing you in some sense as suppliants asking for justice and fair play? These questions are not new to us. From the day the call for this Convention went forth this seeming incongruity and contradiction has been brought to our attention. From one quarter or another, sometimes with argument and sometimes without argument, sometimes with seeming pity for our ignorance, and at other times with fierce censure for our depravity, these questions have met us. With apparent surprise, astonishment, and impatience, we have been asked: "What more can the colored people of this country want than they now have, and what more is possible to them?" It is said they were once slaves, they are now free; they were once subjects, they are now sovereigns; they were once outside of all American institutions, they are

now inside of all and are a recognized part of the whole American people. Why, then, do they hold Colored National Conventions and thus insist upon keeping up the color line between themselves and their white fellow-countrymen? We do not deny the pertinence and plausibility of these questions, nor do we shrink from a candid answer to the argument which they are supposed to contain. For we do not forget that they are not only put to us by those who have no sympathy with us, but by many who wish us well, and that in any case they deserve an answer. Before, however, we proceed to answer them, we digress here to say that there is only one element associated with them which excites the least bitterness of feeling in us, or that calls for special rebuke, and that is when they fall from the lips and pens of colored men who suffer with us and ought to know better. A few such men, well known to us and the country, happening to be more fortunate in the possession of wealth, education, and position than their humbler brethren, have found it convenient to chime in with the popular cry against our assembling, on the ground that we have no valid reason for this measure or for any other separate from the whites; that we ought to be satisfied with things as they are. With white men who thus object the case is different and less painful. For them there is a chance for charity. Educated as they are and have been for centuries, taught to look upon colored people as a lower order of humanity than themselves, and as having few rights, if any, above domestic animals, regarding them also through the medium of their beneficent religious creeds and just laws—as if law and practice were identical—some allowance can, and perhaps ought to, be made when they misapprehend our real situation and deny our wants and assume a virtue they do not possess. But no such excuse or apology can be properly framed for men who are in any way identified with us. What may be erroneous in others implies either baseness or imbecility in them. Such men, it seems to us, are either deficient in self-respect or too mean, servile and cowardly to assert the true dignity of their manhood and that of their race. To admit that there are such men among us is a disagreeable and humiliating confession. But in this respect, as in others, we are not without the consolation of company; we are neither alone nor singular in the production of just such characters. All oppressed people have been thus afflicted.

It is one of the most conspicuous evils of caste and oppression, that they inevitably tend to make cowards and serviles of their victims, men ever ready to bend the knee to pride and power that thrift may follow fawning, willing to betray the cause of the many to serve the ends of the few ; men who never hesitate to sell a friend when they think they can thereby purchase an enemy. Specimens of this sort may be found everywhere and at all times. There were Northern men with Southern principles in the time of slavery, and Tories in the revolution for independence. There are betrayers and informers to-day in Ireland, ready to kiss the hand that smites them and strike down the arm reached out to save them. Considering our long subjection to servitude and caste, and the many temptations to which we are exposed to betray our race into the hands of their enemies, the wonder is not that we have so many traitors among us as that we have so few.

The most of our people, to their honor be it said, are remarkably sound and true to each other. To those who think we have no cause to hold this convention, we freely admit that, so far as the organic law of the land is concerned, we have indeed nothing to complain of, to ask or desire. There may be need of legislation, but the organic law is sound.

Happily for us and for the honor of the Republic, the United States Constitution is just, liberal, and friendly. The amendments to that instrument, adopted in the trying times of reconstruction of the Southern States, are a credit to the courage and statesmanship of the leading men of that crisis. These amendments establish freedom and abolish all unfair and invidious discrimination against citizens on account of race and color, so far as law can do so. In their view, citizens are neither black nor white, and all are equals. With this admission and this merited reproof to trimmers and traitors, we again come to the question, Why are we here in this National Convention ? To this we answer, first, because there is a power in numbers and in union ; because the many are more than the few ; because the voice of a whole people, oppressed by a common injustice, is far more likely to command attention and exert an influence on the public mind than the voice of single individuals and isolated organizations ; because, coming together from all parts of the country, the members of a National convention have the means of a more comprehensive knowledge of the general situation, and may, therefore, fairly be presumed to conceive more clearly and ex-

press more fully and wisely the policy it may be necessary for them to pursue in the premises. Because conventions of the people are in themselves harmless, and when made the means of setting forth grievances, whether real or fancied, they are the safety-valves of the Republic, a wise and safe substitute for violence, dynamite, and all sorts of revolutionary action against the peace and good order of society. If they are held without sufficient reason, that fact will be made manifest in their proceedings, and people will only smile at their weakness and pass on to their usual business without troubling themselves about the empty noise they are able to make. But if held with good cause, and by wise, sober, and earnest men, that fact will be made apparent and the result will be salutary. That good old maxim, which has come down to us from revolutionary times, that error may be safely tolerated, while truth is left free to combat it, applies here. A bad law is all the sooner repealed by being executed, and error is sooner dispelled by exposure than by silence. So much we have deemed it fit to say of conventions generally, because our resort to this measure has been treated by many as if there were something radically wrong in the very idea of a convention. It has been treated as if it were some ghastly, secret conclave, sitting in darkness to devise strife and mischief. The fact is, the only serious feature in the argument against us is the one which respects color. We are asked not only why hold a convention, but, with emphasis, why hold a *colored* convention? Why keep up this odious distinction between citizens of a common country and thus give countenance to the color line? It is argued that, if colored men hold conventions, based upon color, white men may hold white conventions based upon color, and thus keep open the chasm between one and the other class of citizens, and keep alive a prejudice which we profess to deplore. We state the argument against us fairly and forcibly, and will answer it candidly and we hope conclusively. By that answer it will be seen that the force of the objection is, after all, more in sound than in substance. No reasonable man will ever object to white men holding conventions in their own interests, when they are once in our condition and we in theirs, when they are the oppressed and we the oppressors. In point of fact, however, white men are already in convention against us in various ways and at many important points. The practical construction of Ameri-

can life is a convention against us. Human law may know no distinction among men in respect of rights, but human practice may. Examples are painfully abundant.

The border men hate the Indians ; the Californian, the Chinaman ; the Mohammedan, the Christian, and *vice versa*. In spite of a common nature and the equality framed into law, this hate works injustice, of which each in their own name and under their own color may justly complain. The apology for observing the color line in the composition of our State and National conventions is in its necessity and in the fact that we must do this or nothing, for if we move our color is recognized and must be. It has its foundation in the exceptional relation we sustain to the white people of the country. A simple statement of our position vindicates at once our convention and our cause.

It is our lot to live among a people whose laws, traditions, and prejudices have been against us for centuries, and from these they are not yet free. To assume that they are free from these evils simply because they have changed their laws is to assume what is utterly unreasonable and contrary to facts. Large bodies move slowly. Individuals may be converted on the instant and change their whole course of life. Nations never. Time and events are required for the conversion of nations. Not even the character of a great political organization can be changed by a new platform. It will be the same old snake though in a new skin. Though we have had war, reconstruction and abolition as a nation, we still linger in the shadow and blight of an extinct institution. Though the colored man is no longer subject to be bought and sold, he is still surrounded by an adverse sentiment which fetters all his movements. In his downward course he meets with no resistance, but his course upward is resented and resisted at every step of his progress. If he comes in ignorance, rags, and wretchedness, he conforms to the popular belief of his character, and in that character he is welcome. But if he shall come as a gentleman, a scholar, and a statesman, he is hailed as a contradiction to the national faith concerning his race, and his coming is resented as impudence. In the one case he may provoke contempt and derision, but in the other he is an affront to pride, and provokes malice. Let him do what he will, there is at present, therefore, no escape for him. The color line meets him everywhere, and in a measure shuts him out from all respectable and profitable

trades and callings. In spite of all your religion and laws he is a rejected man.

He is rejected by trade unions, of every trade, and refused work while he lives, and burial when he dies, and yet he is asked to forget his color, and forget that which everybody else remembers. If he offers himself to a builder as a mechanic, to a client as a lawyer, to a patient as a physician, to a college as a professor, to a firm as a clerk, to a Government Department as an agent, or an officer, he is sternly met on the color line, and his claim to consideration in some way is disputed on the ground of color.

Not even our churches, whose members profess to follow the despised Nazarene, whose home, when on earth, was among the lowly and despised, have yet conquered this feeling of color madness, and what is true of our churches is also true of our courts of law. Neither is free from this all-pervading atmosphere of color hate. The one describes the Deity as impartial, no respecter of persons, and the other the Goddess of Justice as blindfolded, with sword by her side and scales in her hand held evenly between high and low, rich and poor, white and black, but both are the images of American imagination, rather than American practices.

Taking advantage of the general disposition in this country to impute crime to color, white men *color* their faces to commit crime and wash off the hated color to escape punishment. In many places where the commission of crime is alleged against one of our color, the ordinary processes of the law are set aside as too slow for the impetuous justice of the infuriated populace. They take the law into their own bloody hands and proceed to whip, stab, shoot, hang, or burn the alleged culprit, without the intervention of courts, counsel, judges, juries, or witnesses. In such cases it is not the business of the accusers to prove guilt, but it is for the accused to prove his innocence, a thing hard for any man to do, even in a court of law, and utterly impossible for him to do in these infernal Lynch courts. A man accused, surprised, frightened and captured by a motley crowd, dragged with a rope about his neck in midnight-darkness to the nearest tree, and told in the coarsest terms of profanity to prepare for death, would be more than human if he did not, in his terror-stricken appearance, more confirm suspicion of guilt than the contrary. Worse still, in the presence of such hell-black outrages, the pulpit is usually dumb, and the press in the neighborhood is

silent or openly takes side with the mob. There are occasional cases in which white men are lynched, but one sparrow does not make a summer. Every one knows that what is called Lynch law is peculiarly the law for colored people and for nobody else. If there were no other grievance than this horrible and barbarous Lynch law custom, we should be justified in assembling, as we have now done, to expose and denounce it. But this is not all. Even now, after twenty years of so-called emancipation, we are subject to lawless raids of midnight riders, who, with blackened faces, invade our homes and perpetrate the foulest of crimes upon us and our families. This condition of things is too flagrant and notorious to require specifications or proof. Thus in all the relations of life and death we are met by the color line. We cannot ignore it if we would, and ought not if we could. It hunts us at midnight, it denies us accommodation in hotels and justice in the courts; excludes our children from schools, refuses our sons the chance to learn trades, and compels us to pursue only such labor as will bring the least reward. While we recognize the color line as a hurtful force, a mountain barrier to our progress, wounding our bleeding feet with its flinty rocks at every step, we do not despair. We are a hopeful people. This convention is a proof of our faith in you, in reason, in truth and justice—our belief that prejudice, with all its malign accompaniments, may yet be removed by peaceful means; that, assisted by time and events and the growing enlightenment of both races, the color line will ultimately become harmless. When this shall come it will then only be used, as it should be, to distinguish one variety of the human family from another. It will cease to have any civil, political, or moral significance, and colored conventions will then be dispensed with as anachronisms, wholly out of place, but not till then. Do not marvel that we are not discouraged. The faith within us has a rational basis, and is confirmed by facts. When we consider how deep-seated this feeling against us is; the long centuries it has been forming; the forces of avarice which have been marshaled to sustain it; how the language and literature of the country have been pervaded with it; how the church, the press, the play-house, and other influences of the country have been arrayed in its support, the progress toward its extinction must be considered vast and wonderful.

If liberty, with us, is yet but a name, our citizenship is but a sham, and our suffrage thus far only a cruel mockery, we may yet congratulate ourselves upon the fact that the laws and institutions of the country are sound, just and liberal. There is hope for a people when their laws are righteous whether for the moment they conform to their requirements or not. But until this nation shall make its practice accord with its Constitution and its righteous laws, it will not do to reproach the colored people of this country with keeping up the color line—for that people would prove themselves scarcely worthy of even theoretical freedom, to say nothing of practical freedom, if they settled down in silent, servile and cowardly submission to their wrongs, from fear of making their color visible. They are bound by every element of manhood to hold conventions in their own name and on their own behalf, to keep their grievances before the people and make every organized protest against the wrongs inflicted upon them within their power. They should scorn the counsels of cowards, and hang their banner on the outer wall. Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow. We do not believe, as we are often told, that the negro is the ugly child of the national family, and the more he is kept out of sight the better it will be for him. You know that liberty given is never so precious as liberty sought for and fought for. The man outraged is the man to make the outcry. Depend upon it, men will not care much for a people who do not care for themselves. Our meeting here was opposed by some of our members, because it would disturb the peace of the Republican party. The suggestion came from coward lips and misapprehended the character of that party. If the Republican party cannot stand a demand for justice and fair play, it ought to go down. We were men before that party was born, and our manhood is more sacred than any party can be. Parties were made for men, not men for parties.

If the six millions of colored people of this country, armed with the Constitution of the United States, with a million votes of their own to lean upon, and millions of white men at their back, whose hearts are responsive to the claims of humanity, have not sufficient spirit and wisdom to organize and combine to defend themselves from outrage, discrimination, and oppression, it will be idle for them to expect that the Republican party or any other political party will organize and combine for them or care what becomes of

take initiative

them. Men may combine to prevent cruelty to animals, for they are dumb and cannot speak for themselves; but we are men and must speak for ourselves, or we shall not be spoken for at all. We have conventions in America for Ireland, but we should have none if Ireland did not speak for herself. It is because she makes a noise and keeps her cause before the people that other people go to her help. It was the sword of Washington and of Lafayette that gave us Independence. In conclusion upon this color objection, we have to say that we meet here in open daylight. There is nothing sinister about us. The eyes of the nation are upon us. Ten thousand newspapers may tell if they choose of whatever is said and done here. They may commend our wisdom or condemn our folly, precisely as we shall be wise or foolish.

We put ourselves before them as honest men, and ask their judgment upon our work.

THE LABOR QUESTION.

Not the least important among the subjects to which we invite your earnest attention is the condition of the labor class at the South. Their cause is one with the labor classes all over the world. The labor unions of the country should not throw away this colored element of strength. Everywhere there is dissatisfaction with the present relation of labor and capital, and to-day no subject wears an aspect more threatening to civilization than the respective claims of capital and labor, landlords and tenants. In what we have to say for our laboring class we expect to have and ought to have the sympathy and support of laboring men everywhere and of every color.

It is a great mistake for any class of laborers to isolate itself and thus weaken the bond of brotherhood between those on whom the burden and hardships of labor fall. The fortunate ones of the earth, who are abundant in land and money and know nothing of the anxious care and pinching poverty of the laboring classes, may be indifferent to the appeal for justice at this point, but the laboring classes cannot afford to be indifferent. What labor everywhere wants, what it ought to have, and will some day demand and receive, is an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. As the laborer becomes more intelligent he will develop what capital he already possesses—that is the power to organize and combine for its own protection. Experience demonstrates that there may be a

wages of slavery only a little less galling and crushing in its effects than chattel slavery, and that this slavery of wages must go down with the other.

There is nothing more common now than the remark that the physical condition of the freedmen of the South is immeasurably worse than in the time of slavery; that in respect to food, clothing and shelter they are wretched, miserable and destitute; that they are worse masters to themselves than their old masters were to them. To add insult to injury, the reproach of their condition is charged upon themselves. A grandson of John C. Calhoun, an Arkansas land-owner, testifying the other day before the Senate Committee of Labor and Education, says the "negroes are so indolent that they fail to take advantage of the opportunities offered them; that they will only devote so much of their time to work as will enable them to procure the necessities of life; that there is danger of a war of races," etc., etc.

His testimony proclaims him the grandson of the man whose name he bears. The blame which belongs to his own class he shifts from them to the shoulders of labor. It becomes us to test the truth of that assertion by the light of reason, and by appeals to indisputable facts. Of course the land-owners of the South may be expected to view things differently from the landless. The slaveholders always did look at things a little differently from the slaves, and we therefore insist that, in order that the whole truth shall be brought out, the laborer as well as the capitalist shall be called as witnesses before the Senate Committee of Labor and Education. Experience proves that it takes more than one class of people to tell the whole truth about matters in which they are interested on opposite sides, and we protest against the allowance of only one side of the labor question to be heard by the country in this case. Meanwhile, a little reason and reflection will in some measure bring out truth! The colored people of the South are the laboring people of the South. ¶ The labor of a country is the source of its wealth; without the colored laborer to-day the South would be a howling wilderness, given up to bats, owls, wolves, and bears. He was the source of its wealth before the war, and has been the source of its prosperity since the war. He almost alone is visible in her fields, with implements of toil in his hands, and laboriously using them to-day.

Let us look candidly at the matter. While we see and hear

that the South is more prosperous than it ever was before and rapidly recovering from the waste of war, while we read that it raises more cotton, sugar, rice, tobacco, corn, and other valuable products than it ever produced before, how happens it, we sternly ask, that the houses of its laborers are miserable huts, that their clothes are rags, and their food the coarsest and scantiest? How happens it that the land-owner is becoming richer and the laborer poorer?

The implication is irresistible—that where the landlord is prosperous the laborer ought to share his prosperity, and whenever and wherever we find this is not the case there is manifestly wrong somewhere.

This sharp contrast of wealth and poverty, as every thoughtful man knows, can exist only in one way, and from one cause, and that is by one getting more than its proper share of the reward of industry, and the other side getting less, and that in some way labor has been defrauded or otherwise denied of its due proportion, and we think the facts, as well as this philosophy, will support this view in the present case, and do so conclusively. We utterly deny that the colored people of the South are too lazy to work, or that they are indifferent to their physical wants; as already said, they are the workers of that section.

The trouble is not that the colored people of the South are indolent, but that no matter how hard or how persistent may be their industry, they get barely enough for their labor to support life at the very low point at which we find them. We therefore throw off the burden of disgrace and reproach from the laborer where Mr. Calhoun and others of his class would place it, and put it on the land-owner where it belongs. It is the old case over again. The black man does the work and the white man gets the money.

It may be said after all the colored people have themselves to blame for this state of things, because they have not intelligently taken the matter into their own hands and provided a remedy for the evil they suffer.

Some blame may attach at this point. But those who reproach us thus should remember that it is hard for labor, however fortunately and favorably surrounded, to cope with the tremendous power of capital in any contest for higher wages or improved condition. A strike for higher wages is seldom successful, and is often injurious to the strikers; the losses sustained are seldom compensated by the concessions

gained. A case in point is the recent strike of the telegraph operators—a more intelligent class can nowhere be found. It was a contest of brains against money, and the want of money compelled intelligence to surrender to wealth.

An empty sack is not easily made to stand upright. The man who has it in his power to say to a man, you must work the land for me for such wages as I choose to give, has a power of slavery over him as real, if not as complete, as he who compels toil under the lash. All that a man hath will he give for his life.

In contemplating the little progress made by the colored people in the acquisition of property in the South, and their present wretched condition, the circumstances of their emancipation should not be forgotten. Measurement in their case should not begin from the height yet to be attained by them, but from the depths whence they have come.

It should be remembered by our severe judges that freedom came to us not from the sober dictates of wisdom, or from any normal condition of things, not as a matter of choice on the part of the land-owners of the South, nor from moral considerations on the part of the North. It was born of battle and of blood. It came across fields of smoke and fire strewn with wounded, bleeding, and dying men. Not from the Heaven of Peace amid the morning stars, but from the hell of war—out of the tempest and whirlwind of warlike passions, mingled with deadly hate and a spirit of revenge; it came, not so much as a boon to us as a blast to the enemy. Those against whom the measure was directed were the land-owners, and they were not angels, but men, and, being men, it was to be expected they would resent the blow. They did resent it, and a part of that resentment unhappily fell upon us.

At first the land-owners drove us out of our old quarters, and told us they did not want us in their fields; that they meant to import German, Irish, and Chinese laborers. But as the passions of the war gradually subsided we were taken back to our old places; but, plainly enough, this change of front was not from choice, but necessity. Feeling themselves somehow or other entitled to our labor without the payment of wages, it was not strange that they should make the hardest bargains for our labor, and get it for as little as possible. For them the contest was easy; their tremendous power and our weakness easily gave them the victory.

Against the voice of Stevens, Sumner, and Wade, and other

farseeing statesmen, the Government by whom we were emancipated left us completely in the power of our former owners. They turned us loose to the open sky and left us not a foot of ground from which to get a crust of bread.

It did not do as well by us as Russia did by her serfs, or Pharaoh did by the Hebrews. With freedom Russia gave land and Egypt loaned jewels.

It may have been best to leave us thus to make terms with those whose wrath it had kindled against us. It does not seem right that we should have been so left, but it fully explains our present poverty and wretchedness.

The marvel is not that we are poor in such circumstances, but rather that we were not exterminated. In view of the circumstances, our extermination was confidently predicted. The facts that we still live and have increased in higher ratio than the native white people of the South are proofs of our vitality, and, in some degree, of our industry.

Nor is it to be wondered at that the standard of morals is not higher among us, that respect for the rights of property is not stronger. The power of life and death held over labor which says you shall work for me on my own terms or starve, is a source of crime, as well as poverty.

Weeds do not more naturally spring out of a manure pile than crime out of enforced destitution. Out of the misery of Ireland comes murder, assassination, fire, and sword. The Irish are by nature no worse than other people, and no better. If oppression makes a wise man mad it may do the same, and worse, to a people who are not reputed wise. The woe pronounced upon those who keep back wages of the laborer by fraud is self-acting and self-executing and certain as death. The world is full of warnings.

THE ORDER SYSTEM.

No more crafty and effective device for defrauding the southern laborers could be adopted than the one that substitutes orders upon shopkeepers for currency in payment of wages. It has the merit of a show of honesty, while it puts the laborer completely at the mercy of the land-owner and the shopkeeper. He is between the upper and the nether millstones, and is hence ground to dust. It gives the shopkeeper a customer who can trade with no other storekeeper, and thus leaves the latter no motive for fair dealing except his own moral sense, which is never too strong. While the

laborer holding the orders is tempted by their worthlessness, as a circulating medium, to get rid of them at any sacrifice, and hence is led into extravagance and consequent destitution.

The merchant puts him off with his poorest commodities at highest prices, and can say to him take these or nothing. Worse still. By this means the laborer is brought into debt, and hence is kept always in the power of the land-owner. When this system is not pursued and land is rented to the freedman, he is charged more for the use of an acre of land for a single year than the land would bring in the market if offered for sale. On such a system of fraud and wrong one might well invoke a bolt from heaven—red with uncommon wrath.

It is said if the colored people do not like the conditions upon which their labor is demanded and secured, let them leave and go elsewhere. A more heartless suggestion never emanated from an oppressor. Having for years paid them in shop orders, utterly worthless outside the shop to which they are directed, without a dollar in their pockets, brought by this crafty process into bondage to the land-owners, who can and would arrest them if they should attempt to leave when they are told to go.

We commend the whole subject to the Senate Committee of Labor and Education, and urge upon that committee the duty to call before it not only the land-owners, but the landless laborers of the South, and thus get at the whole truth concerning the labor question of that section.

EDUCATION.

On the subject of equal education and educational facilities, mentioned in the call for this convention, we expect little resistance from any quarter. It is everywhere an accepted truth, that in a country governed by the people, like ours, education of the youth of all classes is vital to its welfare, prosperity, and to its existence.

In the light of this unquestioned proposition, the patriot cannot but view with a shudder the widespread and truly alarming illiteracy as revealed by the census of 1880.

The question as to how this evil is to be remedied is an important one. Certain it is that it will not do to trust to the philanthropy of wealthy individuals or benevolent societies to remove it. The States in which this illiteracy prevails either

can not or will not provide adequate systems of education for their own youth. But, however this may be, the fact remains that the whole country is directly interested in the education of every child that lives within its borders. The ignorance of any part of the American people so deeply concerns all the rest that there can be no doubt of the right to pass laws compelling the attendance of every child at school. Believing that such is now required and ought to be enacted, we hereby put ourselves on record in favor of stringent laws to this end.

In the presence of this appalling picture, presented by the last census, we hold it to be the imperative duty of Congress to take hold of this important subject, and, without waiting for the States to adopt liberal school systems within their respective jurisdictions, to enter vigorously upon the work of universal education.

The National Government, with its immense resources, can carry the benefits of a sound common-school education to the door of every poor man from Maine to Texas, and to withhold this boon is to neglect the greatest assurance it has of its own perpetuity. As a part of the American people we unite most emphatically with others who have already spoken on this subject, in urging Congress to lay the foundation of a great national system of aid to education at its next session.

In this connection, and as germane to the subject of education under national auspices, we would most respectfully and earnestly request Congress to authorize the appointment of a commission of three or more persons of suitable character and qualifications to ascertain the legal claimants, as far as they can, to a large fund now in the United States treasury, appropriated for the payment of bounties of colored soldiers and sailors ; and to provide by law that at the expiration of three or five years the balance remaining in the treasury be distributed among the colored colleges of the country, giving the preference as to amounts to the schools that are doing effective work in industrial branches.

FREEDMEN'S BANK.

The colored people have suffered much on account of the failure of the Freedman's bank. Their loss by this institution was a peculiar hardship, coming as it did upon them in the days of their greatest weakness. It is certain that the

depositors in this institution were led to believe that as Congress had chartered it and established its headquarters at the capital the Government in some way was responsible for the safe keeping of their money.

Without the dissemination of this belief it would never have had the confidence of the people as it did nor have secured such an immense deposit. Nobody authorized to speak for the Government ever corrected this deception, but on the contrary, Congress continued to legislate for the bank as if all that had been claimed for it was true.

Under these circumstances, together with much more that might be said in favor of such a measure, we ask Congress to reimburse the unfortunate victims of that institution, and thus carry hope and give to many fresh encouragement in the battle of life.

BOUNTY AND PENSION LAWS.

We desire, also, to call the attention of Congress and the country to the bounty and pension laws and to the filing of original claims. We ask for the passage of an act extending the time for filing original claims beyond the present limit.

This we do for the reason that many of the soldiers and sailors that served in the war of the rebellion and their heirs, and especially colored claimants living in parts of the country where they have but meagre means of information, have been, and still are, ignorant of their rights and the methods of enforcing them.

But while we urge these duties on Congress and the country, we must never forget that any race worth living will live, and whether Congress heeds our request in these and other particulars or not, we must demonstrate our capacity to live by living. We must acquire property and educate the hands and hearts and heads of our children whether we are helped or not. Races that fail to do these things die politically and socially, and are only fit to die.

One great source of independence that has been sought by multitudes of our white fellow-citizens is still open to us—we refer to the public lands in the great West. The amazing rapidity with which the public lands are being taken up warns us that we must lay hold of this opportunity soon, or it will be gone forever. The Government gives to every actual settler, under certain conditions, 160 acres of land. By addressing a letter to the United States Land Office, Washington, D.

C., any person will receive full information in regard to this subject. Thousands of white men have settled on these lands with scarcely any money beyond their immediate wants, and in a few years have found themselves the lords of a 160 acre farm. Let us do likewise.

CIVIL RIGHTS.

The right of every American citizen to select his own society and invite whom he will to his own parlor and table should be sacredly respected. A man's house is his castle, and he has a right to admit or refuse admission to it as he may please, and defend his house from all intruders even with force, if need be. This right belongs to the humblest not less than the highest, and the exercise of it by any of our citizens toward anybody or class who may presume to intrude, should cause no complaint, for each and all may exercise the same right toward whom he will.

When he quits his home and goes upon the public street, enters a public car or a public house, he has no exclusive right of occupancy. He is only a part of the great public, and while he has the right to walk, ride, and be accommodated with food and shelter in a public conveyance or hotel, he has no exclusive right to say that another citizen, tall or short, black or white, shall not have the same civil treatment with himself. The argument against equal rights at hotels is very improperly put upon the ground that the exercise of such rights, it is insisted, is social equality. But this ground is unreasonable. It is hard to say what social equality is, but it is certain that going into the same street car, hotel, or steamboat cabin does not make any man society for another any more than flying in the same air makes all birds of one feather.

Two men may be seated at the same table at a hotel; one may be a Webster in intellect, and the other a Guiteau in feebleness of mind and morals, and, of course, socially and intellectually, they are as wide apart as are the poles of the moral universe, but their civil rights are the same. The distinction between the two sorts of equality is broad and plain to the understanding of the most limited, and yet, blinded by prejudice, men never cease to confound one with the other, and allow themselves to infringe the civil rights of their fellow-citizens as if those rights were, in some way, in violation of their social rights.

That this denial of rights to us is because of our color, only

as color is a badge of condition, is manifest in the fact that no matter how decently dressed or well-behaved a colored man may be, he is denied civil treatment in the ways thus pointed out, unless he comes as a servant. His color, not his character, determines the place he shall hold and the kind of treatment he shall receive. That this is due to a prejudice and has no rational principle under it is seen in the fact that the presence of colored persons in hotels and rail cars is only offensive when they are there as guests and passengers. As servants they are welcome, but as equal citizens they are not. It is also seen in the further fact that nowhere else on the globe, except in the United States, are colored people subject to insult and outrage on account of color. The colored traveler in Europe does not meet it, and we denounce it here as a disgrace to American civilization and American religion and as a violation of the spirit and letter of the Constitution of the United States. From those courts which have solemnly sworn to support the Constitution and that yet treat this provision of it with contempt we appeal to the people, and call upon our friends to remember our civil rights at the ballot-box. On the point of the two equalities we are determined to be understood.

We leave social equality where it should be left, with each individual man and woman. No law can regulate or control it. It is a matter with which governments have nothing whatever to do. Each may choose his own friends and associates without interference or dictation of any.

POLITICAL EQUALITY.

Flagrant as have been the outrages committed upon colored citizens in respect to their civil rights, more flagrant, shocking, and scandalous still have been the outrages committed upon our political rights by means of bull-dozing and Kukluxing, Mississippi plans, fraudulent counts, tissue ballots, and the like devices. Three States in which the colored people outnumber the white population are without colored representation and their political voice suppressed. The colored citizens in those States are virtually disfranchised, the Constitution held in utter contempt and its provisions nullified. This has been done in the face of the Republican party and successive Republican administrations.

It was once said by the great O'Connell that the history of Ireland might be traced like a wounded man through a crowd

by the blood, and the same may be truly said of the history of the colored voters of the South.

They have marched to the ballot-box in face of gleaming weapons, wounds, and death. They have been abandoned by the Government, and left to the laws of nature. So far as they are concerned, there is no Government or Constitution of the United States.

They are under control of a foul, haggard, and damning conspiracy against reason, law, and constitution. How you can be indifferent, how any leading colored men can allow themselves to be silent in presence of this state of things, we cannot see.

"Should tongues be mute while deeds are wrought which well might shame extremest hell?" And yet they are mute, and condemn our assembling here to speak out in manly tones against the continuance of this infernal reign of terror.

This is no question of party. It is a question of law and government. It is a question whether men shall be protected by law, or be left to the mercy of cyclones of anarchy and bloodshed. It is whether the Government or the mob shall rule this land; whether the promises solemnly made to us in the Constitution be manfully kept or meanly and flagrantly broken. Upon this vital point we ask the whole people of the United States to take notice that whatever of political power we have shall be exerted for no man of any party who will not, in advance of election, promise to use every power given him by the Government, State or National, to make the black man's path to the ballot-box as straight, smooth and safe as that of any other American citizen.

POLITICAL AMBITION.

We are as a people often reproached with ambition for political offices and honors. We are not ashamed of this alleged ambition. Our destitution of such ambition would be our real shame. If the six millions and a half of people whom we represent could develop no aspirants to political office and honor under this Government, their mental indifference, barrenness and stolidity might well enough be taken as proof of their unfitness for American citizenship.

It is no crime to seek or hold office. If it were it would take a larger space than that of Noah's Ark to hold the white criminals.

One of the charges against this convention is that it seeks

for the colored people a larger share than they now possess in the offices and emoluments of the Government.

We are now significantly reminded by even one of our own members that we are only twenty years out of slavery, and we ought therefore to be modest in our aspirations. Such leaders should remember that men will not be religious when the devil turns preacher.

The inveterate and persistent office-seeker and office-holder should be modest when he preaches that virtue to others which he does not himself practice. Wolsey could not tell Cromwell to fling away ambition properly only when he had flung away his own.

We are far from affirming that there may not be too much zeal among colored men in pursuit of political preferment; but the fault is not wholly theirs. They have young men among them noble and true, who are educated and intelligent—fit to engage in enterprise of “pith and moment”—who find themselves shut out from nearly all the avenues of wealth and respectability, and hence they turn their attention to politics. They do so because they can find nothing else. The best cure for the evil is to throw open other avenues and activities to them.

We shall never cease to be a despised and persecuted class while we are known to be excluded by our color from all important positions under the Government.

While we do not make office the one thing important, nor the one condition of our alliance with any party, and hold that the welfare, prosperity and happiness of our whole country is the true criterion of political action for ourselves and for all men, we can not disguise from ourselves the fact that our persistent exclusion from office as a class is a great wrong, fraught with injury, and ought to be resented and opposed by all reasonable and effective means in our power.

We hold it to be self-evident that no class or color should be the exclusive rulers of this country. If there is such a ruling class, there must of course be a subject class, and when this condition is once established this Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, will have perished from the earth.

IN WASHINGTON, D. C., 1885.

On being introduced by Hon. B. K. BRUCE, on the occasion of the twenty-third anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, FREDERICK DOUGLASS spoke as follows :

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS : Your committee of arrangements were pleased to select me as your orator of the day, on an occasion similar to this, two years ago. At that time, while appreciating the honor conferred upon me, I ventured to express the wish that some one of the many competent colored young men of this city and District had been chosen to discharge this honorable duty in my stead. There were excellent reasons for that wish then, and there are even much better reasons for the same wish now. Time and cultivation have largely added to the number of those from whom a suitable selection might have been made, and one of these silent, yet powerful, agents whose mission it is to create and destroy all things mortal has left me much less desire for such distinguished service now than two years ago. Happily, however, the burden is not heavy or grievous, and the proper story of this occasion is simple, familiar, and easily told. In observing the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, we attract the attention of the American people to one of the most important and significant events in their national history, and at the same time evince a grateful and proper sense of the wonderful changes for the better that have taken place in our condition, and in that of the country generally. Though in its immediate and legal operation this act of emancipation was local in its range as to territory, and limited in its application as to the number of persons liberated by it, morally it looms upon us as a grand, comprehensive, and far-reaching measure.

To appreciate its importance we must not consider it as a single independent act standing alone, nor as one pertaining to this District only, nor to the colored people only. We must regard it as a part of a series of splendid public measures, as one of so many steps in the national progress looking to one beneficent and glorious result, a large contribution to the

honor and welfare of the whole country. It was the auspicious beginning of a great movement in the councils of the nation, made necessary by the war, and one which finally culminated in the complete and permanent abolition of slavery, not only in the District of Columbia, but in every part of the Republic. Thus viewed it was the one act which broke the gloomy spell that bound the nation in the bonds of servile, unnatural reverence and awe for slavery. It withdrew the sympathy of European nations from the rebellion ; it brought the moral support of the civilized world to the loyal cause ; it erased the foulest blot that ever stained our national escutcheon ; it gave to the war for the Union a logical, humane, and consistent purpose ; it solved a problem which was the standing grief of good men, and the perplexity of statesmen for ages ; it gave courage and hope to our armies in the field ; it weakened the rebellion ; it raised the whole nation to a higher and happier plane of civilization, and placed the American people where they never were before, in a position where they could consistently and effectively preach liberty to all the nations of the world.

The 16th of April, the anniversary of this great act of the nation, strangely and erroneously enough has been considered simply as the colored man's day only. The business of consecrating and preserving its memory has been, by common consent, relegated to him exclusively. But, in this, our fellow-citizens have been more generous to us than just to themselves. Colored men have very little more reason to hallow this day than have white men. If it brought freedom to us, it brought peace and safety to them, and hence they may well enough unite in this and similar celebrations, and regard the day as theirs as well as ours. No truth taught by our national history is more evident than this, that while slavery dominated the southern half of the Republic, and free institutions prevailed in the northern half, peace and harmony between the two sections were utterly and forever impossible. No man can serve two masters, and the attempt of our Government to do this was a stupendous failure. The union between liberty and slavery was a marriage without love, a house divided against itself ; a couple unequally yoked together, held together by external force, not by moral cohesion ; it brought happiness to neither, and misery to both.

Like any other embodiment of social and material interest peculiar to a given community, slavery generated its own

sentiments, its own morals, manners, and religion ; and begot a character in all around it in favor of its own existence.

In nearly everything indigenous and peculiar to society in the two sections, they were as separate and distinct as are any two nations on the globe. The longer they were thus linked together in the bonds of outward union, the more palpable became their points of difference, and the more passionate became their hostility to each other. Liberty became more and more the glory of the North, and slavery more and more the idol of the South. Not even the bonds of Christian fellowship were strong enough to hold together the churches of the two sections.

In view of this settled and growing antagonism, only one of three courses was opened to the nation : The first was to make the country all slaves, the second was to make it all free, and the third was to divide the Union, and let each section set up a government of its own—the one based upon the system of slavery, and the other based upon the principles of the Declaration of American Independence.

Thanks to the wisdom, loyalty, patriotism, courage, and statesmanship developed by the crisis, the nation rejected equally the idea of making the country all slaves, and permitting two separate nations, with hostile civilizations, side by side, with a chafing, bloody border between them, but chose to give us one country, one citizenship, and one liberty for all the people, and hence we are here this evening. There was never any physical reason for the dissolution of the Union. The geographical and topographical conditions of the country all served to unite rather than to divide the two sections. It was moral not physical dynamite that blew the two sections asunder.

We are told by the poet that—

“ Lands intersected by a narrow frith, abhor each other ;
Mountains interposed make enemies of nations,
Which else, like kindred drops, had mingled into one.”

But in this case there were neither friths nor mountains to separate the South from the North, or to make our Southern brethren hate the people of the North. The moral cause of trouble in the system of slavery being now removed, peace and harmony are possible, and, I doubt not, these blessings, though long delayed, will finally come. In calling attention to the event which makes this day precious we honor our—

selves, and honor the noble and brave men who brought it about. We render our humble tribute of gratitude to-day, not only to those whose valor and whose blood on the battlefield brought freedom to the American slave; not only to the great generals who led our armies, but to our great statesmen as well who framed our laws; and not to these only, but also to the noble army of men and women which preceded both statesmen and warriors in the cause of emancipation, and made these warriors and statesmen possible. Neither would our gratitude forget those who supplemented the great act of emancipation by carrying the blessings of education to the benighted South, thus preparing the liberated freedman for the duties of citizenship.

I need not stop here to call the roll of any of these classes. The nation knows the debt it owes them, and will never forget them. We have but to mention the honored name of Abraham Lincoln in the Presidential chair, of Ulysses S. Grant in the field, at whose bedside a grateful nation now stands mute in sympathy and sad expectation; of William Lloyd Garrison in the columns of the *Liberator*, of Wendell Phillips on the rostrum, of Charles Sumner in the Senate, to cause a host of noble men and women to start up and pass in review before us.

But I drop this brief reference to the history and personnel of the anti-slavery movement, and will speak of matters nearer our times and equally pertinent to this occasion. Those who abolished slavery did their work, and did it well. They served their day and generation with wisdom, courage, and fortitude, and are an example to this and coming generations. They bravely upheld the principles of liberty and justice, and it will go well with this nation and with us if we in our time, and if those who are to come after us in theirs, shall adhere to and uphold these same principles with equal zeal, courage, fidelity, and fortitude. One generation cannot safely rest on the achievements of another, and ought not so to rest.

Hitherto there has been little variety in the thoughts, resolutions, and addresses presented for consideration on occasions similar to this. Each celebration has been almost a *fac-simile* of its predecessors. The speeches have been little more than echoes of those made before, because the conditions of their utterances have been so uniform, and all one way. To-day, however, conditions are changed, or appear to be changed. We do not stand where we stood one year ago. We are confronted by a new Administration. The term

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of twenty-four years of steady, unbroken, successful Republican rule is ended. The great Republican party that carried the country safely through the late war against the rebellion, emancipated the slave, saved the Union, reconstructed the government of the Southern States, enfranchised the freedmen, raised the national credit, improved the currency, decreased the national debt, and did more for the honor, prosperity, and glory of the American people than was ever done before in the same length of time by any party in any country under similar circumstances, has been defeated, humiliated, and driven from place and power.

For the first time since the chains fell from the limbs of the slaves of the District of Columbia ; for the first time since slaves were raised from chattels to men ; for the first time since they were clothed with the dignity of American citizenship they find themselves under the rule of a political party which steadily opposed their every step from bondage to freedom, and this fact may well enough give a peculiar coloring to the thoughts and feelings with which this anniversary of emancipation is celebrated.

The great question of the hour respects the true significance of this change in the national front. What does it portend ? How will it affect our relations to the people and government of this country ? How was this stupendous change brought about, and, in point of fact, it may be asked with some propriety if there has really been any serious change made in our condition by this change in the relations of parties ?

To the eye of the colored man the change, or apparent change, in the political situation is very marked, and wears a very sinister aspect. He has so long been accustomed to think the Republican party the sheet-anchor of his liberty, the star of all his hopes, that he can see nought but ill in the ascendancy of the Democratic party. He addresses it much as did Hamlet his father's ghost :

“ Tell why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements ; why the sepulchre.
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws to cast thee up again.
What may this mean, that thou, dead corpse,
Again in complete steel, revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous, and we, poor fools of nature,
So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls ? ”

It is, perhaps, too early to determine the full significance

of the return of the Democratic party to power, or to tell just how that return to power came about. One thing must be admitted, and that is that the power and vitality of the Democratic party have been vastly underrated. It has indulged in vices and crimes enough to have killed a dozen ordinary parties, and yet it lives. At times it has really seemed to be dead. Some said it had died by opposing the war for the Union, but it was not so. We thought the life had gone out of it when it took our late friend, Horace Greely, for its candidate for the Presidency and adopted a Republican platform, but it was not so.

It was the same old party in a new dress, and time has shown that it was as full of life and power as ever. The fact is, it was never either honestly dead or securely buried. Even when it slept it had one eye open, and saw better with that one eye than did the Republican party with its two. Our mistakes concerning it have been made abundantly clear by the late election and the dazzling splendor of the recent inauguration. We thought the Democratic party dead when it was alive, and the Republican party alive and strong when it was half dead. Long continuance in power had developed rival ambitions, personal animosities, factional combinations in the Republican party that were fatal to its success and even endangered its life.

One great lesson taught by Republican defeat is familiar to all. It is the folly of relying upon past good behavior for present success. Parties, like men, must act in the living present or fail. It is not what they have done or left undone in the past that turns the scale, but what they are doing, and mean to do now. The result shows that neither the past good conduct of the Republican party nor the past bad conduct of the Democratic party has had much to do with the late election.

Americans have too little memory for good or bad political conduct. The people have said in the late election, "We care nothing for your past; but what is your present character and work?" And in rendering judgment they have said, "We see little ground for preferring one to the other."

But, fellow-citizens, it is consoling to think that this change in the political front justly implies no real change for the worse in the moral convictions of the American people. On the great questions that divided the parties during the periods of war and reconstruction there has been no change what-

ever. Upon all the great measures of justice, liberty, and civilization, originated and carried through Congress by the Republican party, I believe the heart of the nation to be still safe and sound. If the measures then in controversy between the parties were now submitted to the American people, I fully believe they would sustain them one and all by an overwhelming vote.

The trouble was that the Republican party in the late campaign forgot for the moment its high mission as the party of great moral ideas, and sought victory on grounds far below its ordinary level. It made national pelf more important and prominent than national purity. It made the body more important than the soul; national prosperity more important than national justice. There was no square issue made up between the parties. One talked in favor of the tariff and the other did not talk against it. Both together beat the air and raised a dust, confused counsel, blinded the voters, and rendered victory a thing of chance rather than a thing of choice. The Republican party was not more surprised by defeat than the Democratic party was astonished by victory. Twelve hundred votes would have changed the result; so that nothing for the future can be safely predicted upon the election either way. It does not imply that the Democratic party is in power to stay, or that the Republican party is out of power to stay, or that new parties are to arise and take the place of the old.

While it was painfully evident that the Republican party, during the late canvass, had little or nothing to say against the outrages committed upon the newly enfranchised people of the South, it was equally plain that the Democratic party had nothing to say in defense of these outrages. Yet it is not strange, in view of the history of the two parties, that much alarm was felt by colored people all over the South when they first learned that the great Republican party was defeated and that the Democratic party was soon to administer the National Government.

Ignorant as the colored people of the South have been, and may still be, about other matters of national importance, they have always been intelligent enough as to the character and relations of political parties. They have never been mistaken as to the historical difference between the party which gave them liberty and the party which sought to continue their enslavement. They had known the Democratic party long and

well and only as the party of the old master class. They naturally held the triumph of that party as a victory of the old master class. In the panic of the moment they saw in it a possible attempt to rehabilitate the old order of government in the South, in which they would be greatly oppressed if not enslaved.

In the joy and exultation of the old master class over the defeat of the Republican party, and over the return of the old Democratic party to power, they read what they thought their doom. Jealous of their newly gained liberty, as well they might be, feeling themselves in peril and left naked to their enemies, their fears amounted to agony. But, thanks to the kind assurances promptly given by the President-elect and by other Democrats in high places, this alarm was transient, and has now given way in some measure to a feeling of confidence and security.

How long this feeling of confidence and security will last, however, will depend upon the future policy of the present administration. The inaugural address of President Cleveland was all that any friend of liberty and justice could reasonably ask for the freedmen. It was a frank and manly avowal, worthy of the occasion. It accepted their citizenship as a fact settled beyond debate, and as a subject which ought to attract attention only with a view to the improvement of their character and their better qualification by education for the duties and responsibilities of citizens of the Republic.

No better words have dropped from the east portico of the Capitol since the inauguration days of Abraham Lincoln and Gen. Grant. I believe they were sincerely spoken, but whether the President will be able to administer the government in the light of those liberal sentiments is an open question. The one-man power in our government is very great, but the power of party may be greater. The President is not the autocrat, but the executive of the nation. But, happily, the executive is yet a power, and may be able to obtain the support of the co-ordinate branches of the government in so plain a duty as protecting the rights of the colored citizens, with those of all other citizens of the Republic. For one, though Republican I am, and have been, and ever expect to be, though I did what I could to elect James G. Blaine as President of the United States, I am disposed to trust President Cleveland. By his words, as well as by his oath of office, solemnly subscribed to before uncounted thousands of American citizens,

he is held and firmly bound to execute the Constitution of the United States in the fullness of its spirit and in the completeness of its letter, and thus far he has shown no disposition to shrink from that duty.

The Southern question is evidently the most difficult question with which President Cleveland will have to deal. Hard as it may be to manage his party on the civil service question, where he has only to deal with hungry and thirsty office-seekers, nineteen out of every twenty of whom he must necessarily offend by failing to find desirable places for them, he will find it incomparably harder to meet that party's wishes in dealing with the Southern question. There are several methods of disposing of this Southern question open to him, and there are lions in the way, whichever method he may adopt.

First. He may adopt a policy of total indifference. He may shut his eyes to the fact that in all of the Gulf States political rights of colored citizens are literally stamped out; that the Constitution which he has solemnly sworn to support and enforce is under the feet of the mob; that in those States there is no such thing as a fair election and an honest count. He may utterly refuse to interfere by word or deed for the enforcement of the Constitution and for the protection of the ballot, and let the Southern question drift whithersoever it will, to a port of safety or to a rock of disaster. He will probably be counselled to pursue the course of President Hayes, but I hope he will refuse to follow it. The reasons which supported that policy do not exist in the case of a Democratic President. Mr. Hayes made a virtue of necessity. He had fair warning that not a dollar or a dime would be voted by a Democratic Congress if the army were kept in the South. The cry of the country was against what was called bayonet rule.

Secondly. The President may pursue a temporizing policy; keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the heart, a half-hearted, a neither hot nor cold, a good Lord and good devil policy. He may try to avoid giving offence to any, and thus succeed in pleasing none; a policy which no man or party can pursue without inviting and earning the scorn and contempt of all honest men and of all honest parties.

Thirdly. He may decide to accept the Mississippi plan of conducting elections at the South; encourage violence and crime; elevate to office the men whose hands are reddest with innocent blood; force the negroes out of Southern politics by

the shot-gun and the bulldozer's whip ; cheat them out of the elective franchise ; suppress the Republican vote ; kill off their white Republican leaders, and keep the South solid ; and keep its one hundred and fifty-three electoral votes—obtained thus by force, fraud, and red-handed violence—ready to be cast for a Democratic candidate in 1888. This might be acceptable to a certain class of Democrats at the South, but the Democrats of the North would abhor and denounce it as a bloody and hell-black policy. It would hurl the party from power in spite of the solid South, and keep it out of power another four and twenty years.

Fourthly. He may sustain a policy of absolute fidelity to all the requirements of the Constitution as it is, and, as John Adams said of the Declaration of Independence, he may bravely say to the South and to the nation : "Sink or swim, survive or perish, I am for the Constitution in all its parts ! I will be true to my oath, and I will, to the best of my ability, and to the fullest extent of my power, defend, protect, and maintain the rights of all citizens, without regard to race or color."

There can be no doubt as to which of these methods of treating the Southern question is the most honest and safe one. There may be many wrong ways for individuals or nations to pursue, but there is but one right way, and it remains to be seen if this is the one the present administration will adopt and pursue. Left to the promptings of his own heart and his own view of his constitutional duties, and to his own sense of the requirements of consistency, and even expediency, I firmly believe that President Cleveland would do his utmost to protect and defend the constitutional rights of all classes of citizens. But he is not left to himself, and may adopt a different policy.

One thing seems plain, which it is well for all parties to know and consider. It is this : There are 7,000,000 of colored citizens now in this Republic. They stand between the two great parties—the Republican party and the Democratic party—and whichever of these two parties shall be most just and true to these 7,000,000 may safely count upon a long lease of power in this Republic. It is not their votes alone that will tell. There is deep down among the people of this country a love of justice and fair play, and that fact will tell. It is now as it was in the time of war, and it will be so in all time. The party which takes the negro on its side will tri-

deciding his
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the nation
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yes

umph. The world moves, and the conditions of success and failure have changed.

Formerly, devotion to slavery was the condition upon which the success of the Democratic party was based. But time and events have swept away this abhorred condition. Liberty, not slavery, is now the autocrat of the Republic. Neither politics nor religion can succeed in the future by pandering to the prejudices arising out of slavery. Let the great Democratic party realize this fact, and shape its policy in accordance with it; let it do justice to the negro, and it will certainly succeed itself in power four years hence, and long years after.

On the contrary, if it forgets the nation's progress, falls back into its old ruts, and seeks success on the old conditions; if it forgets that slavery has now become an anachronism; a superstition of the past, having no proper relation to the age and body of our times, it will be ignominiously driven from place and power four years hence, and no arm can, or ought to, save it.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which,
Taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

This tide is now rising at the feet of President Cleveland and his administration, and, as I have said, it remains to be seen if it will be wisely taken at the flood. Depend upon it, if the Democratic party does not avail itself of the colored man's support the Republican party certainly will. That party is still the colored man's party, and it will be all the more likely to consider the claims of the colored man, in view of its late defeat, and the causes by which that defeat was brought about. Twelve hundred more colored votes in the State of New York would have saved that party from defeat.

Unless the ballot is protected better than heretofore the Augusta speech of the Hon. James G. Blaine, delivered after the election, will be the keynote of the Republican campaign four years hence. There is only one way to prevent the success of the Republican party if that issue is permitted to be raised. The Northern people were sound for free soil; sound for free speech; sound for the Union; sound for reconstruction in other days, and they will be sound for justice and liberty and a free ballot to the newly enfranchised citizens when that issue shall be fairly presented as a living issue between the two contending parties.

The great mistake made by the leaders of the Republican party during the late canvass was the failure to recognize the facts now stated, and their refusal to act upon them. They had become tired of the old issues and wanted new ones. They made their appeal to the pocket of the nation, and not to the heart of the nation. They attended to the mint, anise, and cummin of politics, but omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith. They were loud for the protection of things, but silent for the protection of men. These things they ought to have done, and not left the other undone.

The idea that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is a reproach to any people, was, for a time, lost sight of. The all engrossing thought of the campaign was a judicious, discriminating protective tariff. The great thing was protection to the wool of Ohio ; to the iron of Pennsylvania, and to American manufactures generally. Little was said, thought, or felt about national integrity, the importance of maintaining good faith with the freedmen or the Indian, or the protection of the constitutional rights of American citizens, except where such rights were in no danger.

The great thing to be protected was American industry against competition with the pauper labor of Europe—not protection of the starving labor of the South. The body of the nation was everything ; the soul of the nation was nothing. It did not appear from the campaign speeches that it was important to protect and preserve both, or that the body was not more dependent upon bread for life than was the soul dependent upon truth, justice, benevolence, and good faith for health and life. In the absence of these, the soul of the nation starves, sickens, and dies. It may not fall at once upon the withdrawal of these, but persistent injustice will, in the end, do its certain work of moral destruction. No nation, no party, no man can live long and flourish on falsehood, deceit, injustice, and broken pledges. Loyalty will perish where protection and good faith are denied and withheld, and nothing other than this should be expected, either by a party, a man, or by a government. On the other hand, where good faith is maintained, where justice is upheld, where truth and right prevail, the government will be like the wise man's house in Scripture—the winds may blow, the rains may descend, the flood may come and beat upon it, but it will stand, because it is founded upon the solid rock of principle. I

speak this, not only for the Republican party, but for all parties. Though I am a party man, to me parties are valuable only as they subserve the ends of good government. When they persistently violate the fundamental rights of the humblest and weakest in the land I scout them, despise them, and leave them.

We boast of our riches, power, and glory as a nation, and we have reason to do so. (But what is prosperity, what is power, what is national glory, when national honor, national good faith, and national protection to the rights of our citizens are denied?) Of what avail is citizenship and the elective franchise where a whole people are deliberately abandoned to anarchy by the Government under which they live, and told they must protect themselves from violence as best they may, for, practically, this is just what the American Government has said to the colored and white Republican voters of the South during the last eight years. Minister Lowell was accused of not protecting the rights of Irish-Americans in England, and our ships are just now ordered to Panama to look after the interests of American citizens in Central America. (This is all right, but when and where have our army and navy gone to protect the rights of American citizens at home?) To say, " I am a Roman citizen ! " could once arrest the bloody scourge and cause the brutal tyrant to turn pale. But who cares now for the citizenship of any American Republican, black or white, in Mississippi or South Carolina? We are rich and powerful. But we should remember that the whole vast volume of human history is dotted all along with the wrecks of nations which have perished amid wealth, luxury, and splendor. What doth it profit a nation to gain the whole world if it shall lose its own soul? Henry Clay, in 1839, made an elaborate defence of the right to hold property in man. Two hundred years of legislation has sanctioned and identified negro slaves as property. When warned by anti-slavery men of the dreadful consequences of perpetuating slavery, he said that that warning had been given fifty years before, and that it had been answered by fifty years of unexampled prosperity. His idea was that if slavery were a curse God would not allow a nation that upheld it to prosper. The argument was sophistical, but it contained a great truth after all, and time only was required to verify it. He forgot that God reigns in eternity ; that space is sometimes given for repentance. He did not

remember, as Jefferson did, that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.

Had Mr. Clay lived to see, as we have seen, the union of his beloved country rent asunder at the centre, and hostile armies composed of his beloved countrymen on the field of battle, amid dust, smoke, and fire, blowing each other to pieces from the cannon's mouth ; had he seen five hundred thousand of the youth and flower of both sections of this land cut down by the sword and flung down into bloody graves ; had he seen in the wake of this fratricidal war the smoldering ruins of noble towns and cities, and the nation staggering under a debt heavier than a mountain of gold ; had he seen the sullen discontent and deadly hate which survived the war, and traced all these calamities and more, as he must do, to the existence of slavery, he would, in all the bitterness of his soul, have cursed the day when he poured out his eloquence in defence of that system which brought upon his country these accumulated horrors.

The lesson of this national experience is in place to-day, and it would be well for this nation to study and learn it. Look abroad ! What rocks Europe to-day ? What causes the Emperor of all the Russias to be uneasy on his pillow ? What makes Austria tremble ? Why does England start up frantically at midnight and search her premises ? You know, and I know, that these countries have aggrieved classes among them who have just ground of complaint against their governments.

Now, fellow-citizens, let me speak plainly. This is an age⁷ when men go to and fro in the earth, and knowledge increases; oppressed peoples all over the world are protesting with earthquake emphasis against all forms of injustice, some by one means and some by another. Examples, like certain diseases, are contagious. Railroads, steam navigation, electric wires, newspapers, and traveling emissaries are abroad. [Can you be quite sure that the oppressed laborers in this country, white and colored, will not some day make common cause and learn some of the dangerous modes of protest against injustice adopted in other countries ?] I deal in no threats, for myself or for any of my countrymen, and am only for peaceful methods ; but I say to all oppressors, "Have a care how you goad and imbrute the colored man of the South !" He is weak, but not powerless. He is submissive to wrongs, but not insensible to his rights. He is hopeful, but not incapa-

ble of despair. He can endure, but even to him may come a time when he shall think endurance has ceased to be a virtue. All the world is a school, and in it one lesson is just now being taught in letters of fire and blood, and that is, the utter insecurity of life and property in the presence of an aggrieved class. This lesson can be learned by the ignorant as well as by the wise. Who can blame the negro if, when he is driven from the ballot-box, the jury-box, and the school-house, denied equal rights on railroads and steamboats, called out of his bed at midnight and whipped by regulators, compelled to live in rags and wretchedness, and his wages kept back by fraud, denied a fair trial when accused of crime, he shall imitate the example of other oppressed classes and invokes some terrible explosive power as a means of bringing his oppressors to their senses, and making them respect the claims of justice? This would indeed be madness, but oppression will make even a wise man mad.

It should not be forgotten that the negro is not what he was twenty years ago. Kossuth once said that bayonets think. [The negro is beginning to think.] Years ago a book had as little to say to him and had as little meaning for him as a brick. It was then a thing of darkness and silence. Now it is a thing of light and speech. Education, the sheet anchor of safety to society where liberty and justice are secure, is a dangerous thing to society in the presence of injustice and oppression.

I pursue this thought no further. A hint to the wise ought to be sufficient. Let not my words be construed as a menace, but taken as I mean them—as a warning; not interpreted as inviting disaster, but considered as designed to avert disaster.

Fellow-citizens, many things calculated to make us thoughtful have occurred since I addressed you on an occasion like this, two years ago; but nothing has occurred which ought to make us more thoughtful than the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States on the civil rights bill. That decision came upon the country like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. It came without warning. It was a surprise to enemies and a bitter disappointment to friends. Had the bench been composed of Democratic judges some such a decision might have come upon us without producing any very startling effect. But the fact was otherwise. This blow was dealt us in the house of our friends. The bench was

composed of nine learned Republican judges, and of these nine honorable men only one came to our help, I mean Honorable Justice John M. Harlan. He stood up for the rights of colored citizens as those rights are defined by the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution of the United States. *disappointed*

It was a magnificent spectacle, this grand representation of American justice standing alone, and the country will not soon forget it. Without meaning any disrespect to the Supreme Court, or reflecting upon the purity of its motives, I must say here, as I have said elsewhere, and shall say many times over if my life is spared, that that decision is the most striking illustration I have ever seen of how it is possible to keep alive the letter of the law and at the same time stab its spirit to death. Portia strictly construed the law of Venice for mercy, and this rule of construction has the approval of all the ages, but the Supreme Court of the United States construed American law against the weak and in the interest of prejudice and brutality. Never before was made so clear the meaning of Paul's saying, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

I am glad, and I know that you are glad, that there was one man on that bench who had the mind and heart to be as true to liberty in this its day as was the old Supreme Court of slavery in its day. While slavery existed all presumptions were made in its favor. The obvious intention of the law prevailed, but now the plain intention of the law has been strangled by the letter of the law.

The fourteenth amendment of the Constitution was plainly intended to secure equal rights to all citizens of the United States, without regard to race or color, and Congress was authorized to carry out this provision by appropriate legislation. But by this decision of the Supreme Court the fourteenth amendment has been slain in the house of its friends. I have no doubt that that decision contributed to the defeat of the Republican party in the late election. I repeat, that decision may well make colored men thoughtful.

Kentucky has done many evil things in her time, but she has also done many great and good things. She has recently given us a law by which equal educational advantages have been extended to colored children. Long ago she gave us James G. Birney, the first abolition candidate for the presidency of the United States; a former slave-holder, but one

who emancipated his slaves on his own motion ; a genuine gentleman of the old school, and one to be gratefully remembered by every friend of liberty in this country. She has given us Cassius M. Clay, the man who fought his way to freedom of speech on his native soil. She has given us John G. Fee, the earnest and devoted educator of the freedman. Nor is this all. She has given us two of the largest hearts and broadest minds of which our country can boast ; men who had the courage of their convictions, and who dared, at the peril of what men hold most dear, to be true to their convictions. These strong men—one dead and the other living—are Abraham Lincoln and John M. Harlan. Abraham Lincoln is already enshrined in the hearts of the American people, and Justice John M. Harlan will hold a place beside him in the hearts of his countrymen.

You remember the public meeting held in Lincoln Hall, and the free expression of opinion upon the unsoundness of the decision of the Supreme Court on the civil rights bill. You will also remember that the ablest and boldest words there spoken were from the lips of Robert G. Ingersoll, a man everywhere spoken against as an infidel and a blasphemer. Well, my friends, better be an infidel and a so-called blasphemer than a hypocrite who steals the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in.

Infidel though Mr. Ingersoll may be called, he never turned his back upon his colored brothers, as did the evangelical Christians of this city on the occasion of the late visit of Mr. Moody. Of all the forms of negro hate in this world, save me from that one which clothes itself with the name of the loving Jesus, who, when on earth, especially identified himself with the lowest classes of suffering men, and the proof given of his Messiahship was that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them. The negro can go into the circus, the theatre, the cars, and can be admitted into the lectures of Mr. Ingersoll, but cannot go into an Evangelical Christian meeting.

I do not forget that on the occasion of the civil rights meeting I have mentioned, one evangelical clergyman, a real man of God, gave to the gospel trumpet a certain sound. The religion of Dr. John E. Rankin, like the love of his Redeemer, is not bounded by race or color, but takes in the whole human family. No truer man than he ever ascended a Washington pulpit.

[In conclusion let me say one word more of the soul of the nation and of the importance of keeping it sensitive and responsive to the claims of truth, justice, liberty, and progress. ✓ In speaking of the soul of the nation I deal in no cant phraseology. I speak of that mysterious, invisible, impalpable something which underlies the life alike of individuals and of nations, and determines their character and destiny.

It is the soul that makes a nation great or small, noble or ignoble, weak or strong. It is the soul that exalts it to happiness, or sinks it to misery. While it modifies and shapes all physical conditions, it is itself superior to all such conditions. It is the spiritual side of humanity. Fire cannot burn it, water cannot quench it. Though occult and impalpable, it is just as real as granite or iron. The laws of its life are spiritual, not carnal, and it must conform to these laws or it starves and dies. The outward semblance of it may survive for a time, just as ancient temples and old cathedrals may stand long after the spirit that inspired them has vanished. But they, too, will moulder to ruin and vanish. The life of the nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful, ✓ and virtuous; for upon these conditions depend the life of its life.]

A few years ago a terrible and desolating fire swept over the proud young city of Chicago, and left her architectural splendors in ashes. In a few hours her "cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces" and solemn temples crumbled to dust, and were scattered to the four winds of heaven, so that no man could find them, but there remained the invisible soul of a great people, full of energy, enterprise, and faith, and hence, out of the ashes and hollow desolation, a grander Chicago than the one destroyed arose "as if by magic."

"What constitutes a state?
 Not high raised battlements, or labored mound,
 Thick walls or moated gate;
 Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned;
 Not bays and broad armed ports,
 Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride.
 No, men; high-minded men!
 With power as far above dull brutes endued,
 In forest, brake, or den,
 As beasts excel cold rocks and brambles rude;
 Men who their duties know, ~~and~~
 But know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain." ✓

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knowing!

IN WASHINGTON, D. C., 1886.

In introducing Mr. FREDERICK DOUGLASS, on the occasion of the Twenty-fourth Anniversary of Emancipation in the District of Columbia, Prof. J. M. GREGORY made the following remarks :

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN : For many years prior to 1861 the friends of freedom, seeing the prominence slavery had acquired because of its existence at the capital of the nation, and the evil influence which it necessarily exerted upon legislation, sought in vain by petitions and other measures for its abolition in the District of Columbia. It was not, however, till the national conscience began to be quickened by the reverses of our armies, and legislators to realize the dangers which threatened the life of the nation, that the cause could muster sufficient strength to gain a hearing in Congress.

On the 16th of December, 1861, Mr. Wilson, of Massachusetts, introduced into the Senate a bill providing for the immediate emancipation of slaves in the District upon the payment to the owners of \$300 for each slave. As was to be expected the bill was antagonized by pro-slavery men in the Senate and House. They feared that the measure proposed was the entering wedge for the final overthrow of their pet institution in the South. As subsequent events proved their fears were not without foundation. Notwithstanding the bitter opposition which the bill encountered, it passed both houses of Congress in less than four months from its first introduction in the Senate, and was approved by the President on the 16th of April, just twenty-four years ago to-day.

The debates on this and kindred questions makes memorable the second session of the Thirty-seventh Congress, and they are of special interest because they indicated a new departure in the line of argument pursued by Northern statesmen. They based their arguments for emancipation, not upon grounds of expediency, but the great principles of right and justice.

The importance of this act must not be overlooked. It struck the shackles from the limbs of 3,000 human beings and placed them in the ranks of freemen. It took away the

shame which slavery had brought upon the National Capital. But this was not all. It elevated the nation in its own eyes and in the eyes of the civilized world, and roused a feeling of patriotism and pride. It called forth an expression from the National Legislature, and a majority of the members by solemn vote arrayed themselves on the side of emancipation and liberty, in opposition to slavery and oppression. It was the forerunner of the great emancipation proclamation—that proclamation which more than all his other acts makes the name of Abraham Lincoln secure to all posterity.

In our rejoicing on this occasion we should not forget to hold in grateful remembrance the men whose votes secured the passage of the bill, and especially its author, a man who by his works proved himself a friend of the oppressed, Hon. Henry Wilson, the benefactor of the District.

When the emancipation bill became a law in 1862, there were 15,000 colored people in the District of Columbia, 12,000 of whom were free and the remainder slaves. They maintained eight schools for the education of their children, and were the owners of twelve churches, which cost about \$75,000. With the increase of population came the demand for more churches, so that to-day they have eighty churches and missions in the District. Many of the churches are very valuable and located on some of the principal streets and avenues, the new Metropolitan Church alone being valued at \$100,000.

Under the old system the word "colored" appeared opposite the name of each colored person paying taxes on the books of the Collector of Taxes. Now, no such distinction is made, and there are no data from which the number paying taxes among colored citizens can be definitely known. From information received at the tax office, I judge that there are about 180 persons with property assessed individually at \$1,000, the assessed valuation of real estate in this District being two-thirds to actual cash valuation. It will be quite in keeping with the facts to say that two of our citizens have acquired property valued at \$100,000 each, two at \$75,000, six at \$25,000, fifteen at \$20,000, twenty at \$10,000, and fifty at \$5,000, making in the aggregate at least a million of dollars. I am positively assured that the increase in the valuation of property owned by colored men since emancipation is 100 per cent. This, we think, is a most creditable showing for our property interests.

Of the 15,000 colored people in the District at the time of emancipation there were proportionately more skilled carpenters and masons than now in a population of 70,000. But labor has become more diversified. We are now engaged in pursuits in which we had no experience before the war. In 1861 a colored lawyer was a personage unknown to the national capital. Now half a dozen colored lawyers successfully practice their profession in the courts of the District. Then we had no physicians, regular graduates of medical schools; now a dozen or more follow the practice of medicine in the cities of Washington and Georgetown, and are recognized as men of skill and ability by the profession. One of these physicians, with his assistant, is in charge of the Freedman's Hospital, one of the largest and most successful hospitals in the country. Government employment tends to keep out many from some business occupations in which the people in other large cities engage, but this disadvantage, if disadvantage it be considered, operates no more against us than against other citizens.

The greatest progress made, however, and that which is necessarily the first in order of time and importance, has been in matters of education. The schools have increased from 8 to 174, with an average attendance of 9,000 children, giving employment to more than 100 teachers. Twelve of the school-houses in which these schools are conducted are among the largest and most convenient school buildings in the District. Too much cannot be said in praise of the teachers, supervising principals, superintendent and trustees, for it is by their combined efforts largely that the schools have attained that degree of excellence for which they are known. Howard University and Wayland Seminary, placed on heights commanding beautiful views of Washington, are among the results of emancipation. These institutions grew out of the necessities of the times to meet the wants of colored youth for higher and professional education. It is proper that we should take pride in our schools and institutions of learning, for they are the chief instruments through which our children are to receive the training which will fit them to properly discharge the duties that will afterward devolve upon them as men and women and to elevate the race to an equality of development and enlightenment with other peoples.

We often hear the question asked, "What are we to do with the Americanized negro?" Articles have appeared in newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines giving what the author re-

gards as a proper solution of the negro problem, so-called. But I ask why should there be a negro problem any more than a problem for any other class of the American people? We need not go far to seek the answer. It is found in the fact that in certain parts of our country the people are not willing to receive the negro into full fellowship and to grant him the civil and political rights enjoyed in common by other citizens. They take from him the means of elevation and then reproach him with inferiority. They would rejoice to rid the country of his presence by colonization, but seeing the utter hopelessness of the colonization scheme, they seek to inflame the public mind against him by constant appeals to the low and narrow prejudices entertained by certain classes of the American people. When the 300 colored citizens from Cleveland visited President-elect Garfield at Mentor, he said in reply to the address, to which he had given respectful attention, that he did not profess to be more of a friend to colored men than hundreds of others, but he was in favor of giving, and, so far as it was consistent with the duties of his office, would give them *opportunity* to achieve success for themselves. This is all we ask to-day. This is all we can reasonably ask. Give us fair play, equal opportunity, and we will work out our own destinies.

Ten years ago, in this city, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Freedman's Monument in memory of Abraham Lincoln, an eminent divine, after congratulating the orator of the day upon his masterly portrayal of the character of the martyr President, turned to General Grant and said: "There is but one Frederick Douglass." This distinguished citizen, the orator who paid the eloquent tribute to the memory of Mr. Lincoln on the occasion referred to, the Hon. Frederick Douglass, will now address you.

At the conclusion of Prof. Gregory's remarks Mr. Douglass said:

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: I appear before you again, and for the third time since my residence among you, to assist in the celebration of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. And while I highly appreciate the honor and the confidence implied in your call upon me to do so, when I consider the importance of the task it has imposed, I can say in all sincerity, as I have said before, that I wish that your choice of speaker had fallen upon one of our young men, quite as well qualified to serve you as myself. I want to see them coming to the front as I am retiring to the rear.

—humble

Then the fact that I have several times addressed you upon subjects naturally suggested by the recurrence of this interesting anniversary is, of itself, somewhat embarrassing. It is not an easy task to speak many times on the same subject, before the same audience, without repeating the same views and sentiments. If, therefore, you find me committing this offence to-day, you will consider the difficulty of avoiding it, and also that the same views and sentiments are as pertinent and necessary to-day as years ago. You need not fear, however, that I shall inflict upon you any one of my former orations. I am not bound by any such necessity. The field is broad, and the material is abundant. The phases of public affairs touching the colored people of the United States are never stationary. They change with every season, and often many times in the course of a single year. There is no standing still for anybody in this world. We are either rising or falling, advancing or retreating.

Last year, at this time, we were confronted with an unusual and somewhat alarming state of facts. We stood at the gateway of a new and strange administration. After wandering about during twenty-four years, seeking rest and finding none, often hungry and sometimes thirsty, and, though not feeding swine or eating husks, yet not unfrequently found in very low places and wasting the substance of the national family, our prodigal Democratic son, with one tremendous effort of will, returned to the White House, and was received with every demonstration of parental joy and gladness. Of course this did not take place without a murmur of complaint and disapproval. There was an elder brother here as elsewhere ; one who had remained at home, worked the old farm, kept the fences in repair ; one who had done his duty and made things in the old house comfortable and pleasant generally. Indeed, but for his elder brother, the Republican party, the house would have been broken up, the whole family turned out of doors and scattered in poverty and destitution. It was natural, therefore, when this elder brother saw the great doings at the White House one year ago, when he heard the music and saw the dancing, and learned what it was all about, he was not over well pleased, and thought his father not only soft-hearted, but a little soft-headed, and a trifle ungrateful, if not crazy withal. But elder brothers, you know, are usually reasonable and patient, and are generally quite submissive to parental authority, and though he knew

the bad character of the young truant who had now come home, he hoped he had reformed. How far this cheerful and patient hope has been justified by one year of this administration I will not now stop to say; I may, however, remark, as a prelude to what I shall hereafter say, that as far as the colored people of the country are concerned, their condition seems no better and not much worse than under previous administrations. Lynch law, violence, and murder have gone on about the same as formerly, and without the least show of Federal interference or popular rebuke. The Constitution has been openly violated with the usual impunity, and the colored vote has been as completely nullified, suppressed, and scouted as if the fifteenth amendment formed no part of the Constitution, and as if every colored citizen of the South had been struck dead by lightning or blown to atoms by dynamite. There have also been the usual number of outrages committed against the civil rights of colored citizens on highways and by-ways, by land and by water, and the courts of the country, under the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, have shown the same disposition to punish the innocent and shield the guilty, as during the presidency of Mr. Arthur. Perhaps colored men have fared a little worse, so far as office-holding is concerned. In some of the Departments, I am sorry to say, there have been many dismissals, but, even in this respect, colored men have not suffered much more than one-armed soldiers, and other loyal white men, whose places were wanted by deserving Democrats. Upon the whole, candor compels me to admit that this twenty-fourth year of our freedom finds us thoughtful, somewhat mystified by what is passing around us, but hopeful, strong to suffer, and yet strong to strive, with a moderate degree of faith that, under the Constitution and its amendments, we shall yet be clothed with dignity of freedom and American citizenship. But more of this in the right place.

I take it that no apology is needed for these annual celebrations, for, notwithstanding the unfriendly outlook of affairs, we have yet much over which to rejoice. Besides, such demonstrations of popular feeling in regard to large benefits received and progress made, are consistent with and creditable to human nature. They have been observed all along the line of by-gone ages, and are peculiar to no class, clime, race, or color. From the day that Moses is said to have smote the Red Sea, and the Hebrews passed safely over

from Egyptian bondage, leaving Pharaoh overwhelmed and struggling with that hell of waters, down to the 4th of July, 1776, when the fathers of this Republic threw off the British yoke, declared their independence, and appealed to the god of battles, similar events to that which we now celebrate have been gratefully and joyfully commemorated.

If, for any reason, I feel like apologizing to-day, it is not for this celebration, but for an incident connected with it, and by which it is greatly marred. For the first time since the emancipation of the slaves of the District of Columbia we have two celebrations in progress at the same time. This should not be so. By this fact we have said to the world that we are not sufficiently united as a people to celebrate our freedom together. This spectacle of division among men working for a common cause is not pleasing in any case, and is especially displeasing and shocking in this instance. Without attempting to show which party is to blame in this controversy, I have no hesitation in saying that this division itself is most unfortunate, disgraceful, and mortifying. It cannot fail, I fear, to make an unfavorable impression for us upon thoughtful observers. But, standing here as your mouth-piece to-day, I beg the disgusted public to remember that colored men are but men, and that the best men will sometimes differ, and will often differ more widely and violently about trifles than about things of substance, where a difference of opinion would be at least dignified. Something must, however, be pardoned to the spirit of liberty, especially in those who have but recently acquired liberty. There is always some awkwardness in the gait of men who, for the first time, have on their Sunday clothes. When we have enjoyed the blessings of liberty longer we shall put away such childish things and shall act more wisely. We shall think more of a common cause and its requirements and less of obligation to support the claims of rival individual leaders. Depend upon it, a repetition of this spectacle will bring our celebrations into disgrace and make them despicable.

The thought is already gaining ground, that we have not heretofore received the best influence which this anniversary is capable of exerting; that tinsel show, gaudy display, and straggling processions, which empty the alleys and dark places of our city into the broad daylight of our thronged streets and avenues, thus thrusting upon the public view a vastly undue proportion of the most unfortunate, unim-

proved, and unprogressive class of the colored people, and thereby inviting public disgust and contempt, and repelling the more thrifty and self-respecting among us, is a positive hurt to the whole colored population of this city. These annual celebrations of ours should be so arranged as to make a favorable impression for us upon ourselves and upon our fellow-citizens. They should bring into notice the very best elements of our colored population, and in what is said and done on these occasions, we should find a deeper and broader comprehension of our relations and duties. They should kindle in us higher hopes, nobler aspirations, and stimulate us to more earnest endeavors; they should help us to shorten the distance between ourselves and the more highly advanced and highly favored people among whom we are. If they fail to produce, in some measure, such results, they had better be discontinued. I am sure that such a lecture as I have now given on this point may be distasteful to a part of this assembly. But I can say, in all truth, that nothing short of a profound desire to promote the best interests of all concerned, has emboldened me to run the risk of such displeasure, and I hope the motive will excuse my offence.

And now, fellow-citizens, I turn away from this and other merely race considerations, to those common to all our fellow citizens, yet happily those in which we, too, are included. I call attention to the proposed celebration of the centennial anniversary of our present form of government. The year 1789 will never cease to be memorable in the history and progress of the American people. It was in that year of grace that the founders of the American Republic, having tested the strength and discovered the weakness of the old articles of colonial confederation, bravely decided to lay those articles aside as no longer adequate to successful and permanent national existence, and resolved to form a new compact and adopt a new constitution, better suited, in their judgment, to their national character and to their governmental wants. In this instrument they set forth six definite and cardinal objects to be attained by this new departure. These were: First. "To form a more perfect union." Second. "To establish justice." Third. "To provide for the common defense." Fourth. "To insure domestic tranquillity." Fifth. "To promote the general welfare." And sixth. "Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." Perhaps there never was an instrument framed by men at the be-

ginning of any national career designed to accomplish nobler objects than those set forth in the preamble of this constitution. They are objects worthy of a great nation, worthy of those who gave to the world the immortal Declaration of Independence, in which they asserted the equal rights of man, and boldly declared in the face of all the divine right governments of Europe the doctrine that governments derive their right to govern from the consent of the governed.

How far these fundamental objects, solemnly set forth in the Constitution, have been realized by the practical operation of the Government created under it, I will not stop just now to state or explain. Whether the Union has been perfectly formed, whether under the ægis of the Constitution the sacred principle of justice has been established, whether the general welfare has been promoted, or whether the blessings of liberty have been secured, are questions to which reference may be made in a subsequent part of this address. For the present I refer to this grand starting point in the nation's history for another purpose. I wish simply to remind you of the flight of time ; that we are now drawing near the close of the first century of our national existence, and the notice that should be taken of that fact. Without going into the general questions raised a moment ago, as to the fulfillment of what was promised in the Constitution, we may, in passing, affirm what must be admitted by all, that under this form of government so happily described, and so faithfully upheld by the great lamented Abraham Lincoln, as "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people," this nation has become rich, great, progressive, and strong. This fact is cheerfully acknowledged by the whole sisterhood of contemporaneous nations. From thirteen comparatively weak and sparsely populated States, skirting and hovering along the line of our Atlantic coast, constituting a mere string of isolated communities, we now have thirty-eight States covering our broad continent, extending from east to west, and from sea to sea. Under our Constitution the desert and solitary places have been reclaimed and made to blossom as the rose. From a population of seven millions, we have reached the enormous number of fifty millions ; and in less than half a century we shall have double that number. Such an augmentation of wealth, power, and population has no example in the experience of any nation in ancient or modern times. The mind grows dizzy in contemplation of the future

of a country so great and so increasing in greatness, and to whose greatness there seems to be no limit. The question naturally arises, what is to be the effect of such accumulated wealth, such vast increase of population, such expanded domain, and such augmentation of national power? Plainly enough either one of two very opposite conditions may arise. It may either blast or bless, it may lift us to heaven or sink us to perdition.

If we shall become proud, selfish, imperious, oppressive, and rapacious; if we shall persist in trampling on the weak and exalting the strong, worshipping the rich and despising the poor, our doom as a nation is already foreshadowed.

That Almighty Power recognized in one form or another by all thoughtful men; that Almighty Power which controls every atom of the earth, and governs the universe; that Almighty Power which stood and measured the globe, which beheld and drove asunder the nations, will surely deal with us in the future as that Power has dealt in the past with other wicked nations—it will bring us to dust and ashes. The rule of life for individuals and for nations is the same. Neither can escape the consequences of transgression. As they sow, so shall they reap. There is no salvation for either outside of a life of truth and justice. Contradiction to this in theory, for either individuals or nations, is a damning heresy; and contradiction to this in practice is certain destruction.

Large and imposing plans are just now proposed, and are maturing, for the appropriate celebration of this first centennial year of our national life. If these plans should be perfected and executed, as they probably will be, and as they certainly should be, Washington will witness a demonstration in this line far transcending in grandeur and sublimity the centennial exposition in the city of Philadelphia ten years ago.

These celebrations, like our own, have large uses. They serve as lofty pedestals or platforms from which the national patriotism and intelligence may survey the past, and, in some sense, penetrate and divine the national future.

It is also fit and proper that our young and beautiful city of Washington should be the theatre of such a grand national centennial demonstration. It is the capital of the nation, and is, in some sense, the shining sun of our national system, around which our thirty-eight States, linked and interlinked in one unbroken national interest, revolve in union. Upon this spot no one citizen has more rights than another.

mental
heresy

purpose
of demonstration

The right to be here is vested in all alike. Distance does not diminish or alienate, contiguity does not increase any man's right on this soil. In this capital of the nation California is equal to Virginia, and, as Webster said of Bunker Hill, "Wherever else we may be strangers, we are all at home here."

As a part of the people of this great country, we may feel ourselves included. We represent the class which has enriched our soil with its blood, watered it with its tears, and defended it with its strong arms, but have hitherto been excluded from all part in our national glory. Now, however, all is changed. We may look forward with pleasure to the promised National Centennial Exposition, and take some credit to ourselves for helping to make the District of Columbia a suitable place for such a display. We have at least done a large proportion of the most laborious and needed work to this end.

The wisdom of the framers of the Constitution of the United States in granting to the nation, through its Congress, exclusive legislative jurisdiction over the District of Columbia, has in nothing been more abundantly and happily vindicated than in the abolition of slavery, and in making it the freest territory of this country. The benefits of this act are, however, not confined to the colored people. They are shared by all the people of this District; not more by the colored than by the white people.

Washington owes nothing to Maryland or Virginia (though born of those parents) in comparison to its debt to the nation. Through the National Government it has become the elegant and beautiful city that it is. It is the nation that has graded and paved its broad and far-reaching streets and avenues; it is the nation that has fenced and beautified its numerous parks and reservations, and made them the joy of our children, and the admiration of our visitors; it is the nation that has adorned its ample public squares and circles with choice flowers, flowing fountains, and imposing statuary; it is the nation that has erected enduring monuments of bronze and marble in honor of our statesmen, warriors, patriots, and heroes; it is the nation that has built here those vast structures, the different departments, and crowned yonder hill with a Capitol, one of the proudest architectural wonders of the world; it is the nation that has built Washington Monument, the pride of the city, the tallest structure that ever

rose from the ground toward heaven at the bidding of human pride, patriotism, or piety, standing there in full view of all comers, whether approaching by land or water, with its base deep down in the earth, and its capstone against the sky, receiving and reflecting every light and shadow of the passing hour, steady alike in sunshine and storm, defying lightning, whirlwind, and earthquake—its grandeur and sublimity, like Niagara, impress us more and more the longer we hold it in range of vision.

But the nation, as I have already said, has done more for the District of Columbia than to clothe it with material greatness and splendor. It has, by the act of emancipation, imparted to it a moral beauty. It has not only made it a pleasure to the eye, but a joy to the heart. No material adornment or addition has ever done or could do for this District what the abolition of slavery has done. The nation did a great and good thing fifteen years ago by giving us a local government, and a Shepherd that lifted the city out of its deep mud and above its blinding dust and put it on the way to its present greatness, but it did a greater and better thing when it lifted it out of the mire of barbarism coincident with slavery.

Fellow-citizens, we are proud to-day, and justly proud, of the prosperity and the increasing liberality of Washington. With all our fellow-citizens we behold it with pride and pleasure rising and spreading noiselessly around us, almost like the temple of Solomon, without the sound of a hammer. New faces meet us at the corners of the streets and greet us in the market-places. Conveniences and improvements are multiplying on every hand. We walk in the shade of its beautiful trees by day and in the rays of its soft electric lights by night. We make it warm where it is cool, and cool where it is warm, and healthy where it is noxious. Our magnificence fills the stranger and sojourner with admiration and wonder. The contrast between the old time of slavery and the new dispensation of liberty looms upon us on every hand. We feel it in the very air we breathe, and in the friendly aspect of all around us. But time would fail to tell of the vast and wonderful advancement in civilization made in this city by the abolition of slavery.

Perhaps a better idea could be formed of what has been done for Washington and for us by imagining what would be the case in a return to the old condition of things. Imagine

the wheels of progress reversed ; imagine that by some strange and mysterious freak of fortune slavery, with all its horrid concomitants, was revived ; imagine that under the dome of yonder Capitol legislation was carried on, as formerly, by men with pistols in their belts and bullets in their pockets ; imagine the right of speech denied, the right of petition stamped out, the press of the District muzzled, and a word in the streets against slavery the sign for a mob ; imagine a lone woman like Miss Myrtilla Miner, having to defend her right to teach colored girls to read and write with a pistol in her hand, here in this very city, now dotted all over with colored schools, which rival in magnificence the white schools of any other city of the Union ; imagine this, and more, and ask yourselves the question { What progress has been made in liberty and civilization within the borders of this capital ? Further on let us ask : Of what avail would be our cloud-capped towers, our gorgeous palaces, and our solemn temples if slavery again held sway here ? Of what avail would be our marble halls if once more they resounded with the crack of the slave whip, the clank of the fetter, and the rattle of chains ; if slave auctions were held in front of the halls of justice, and chain-gangs were marched over Pennsylvania avenue to the Long Bridge for the New Orleans market ? Of what avail would be our state dinners, our splendid receptions if, like Babylon of old, our people were making merchandise of God's image, trafficking in human blood and in the souls and bodies of men ? Were this District once more covered with this moral blight and mildew you would hear of no plans, as now, ✓ for celebrating within its borders the centennial anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. Bold and audacious as were the advocates of slavery in the olden time they would have been ashamed to invite here the representatives of the civilized world to inspect the workings of their slave system. To have done so would have been like inviting a clean man to touch pitch, a humane man to witness an execution, a tender-hearted woman to witness a slaughter. In its boldest days slavery drew in its claws and presented a velvet paw to strangers. They knew it was like Lord Granby's character, which could only pass without reprobation as it passed without observation. Emancipation liberated the master as well as the slave. The fact that our citizens are now loudly proclaiming Washington to be the

right place for the celebration of the discovery of the continent by Columbus, and the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, is an acknowledgement of and attestation of the higher civilization that has, in their judgment, come here with the abolition of slavery. They no longer dread the gaze of civilized men. They no longer fear lest a word of liberty should fall into the ear of a trembling captive and awaken his manhood. They are no longer required to defend with their lips what they must have condemned in their hearts. When the galling chain dropped from the limbs of the slave the mantle of shame dropped from the brows of their masters. The emancipation of the one was the deliverance of the other ; so that this day, in fact, belongs to the one as truly as it belongs to the other, though it is left to us alone to keep it in memory.

It is usual on occasions of this kind, not only to set forth, as I have in some measure done, what has been gained by the abolition of slavery, but also to speak of the causes and instrumentalities which contributed to this grand result. If this were my first appearance before you on similar anniversaries, I should feel it entirely proper to do so now ; but having discharged this duty faithfully and fully in several former addresses, there is no special reason for a repetition of it in this instance. In one of those addresses I specially endeavored to trace, and did trace with more or less success, the history of the earliest utterances of anti-slavery sentiments in this country and in England. I described the rise, progress, and final triumph of the abolition movement in both countries. I have in no case omitted to do justice to the noble band of men and women who espoused the cause of the slave in the early days of its weakness, and when to do so was to make themselves of no reputation and subjects of the vilest abuse. I have held up their example of virtuous self-sacrifice to the admiration and imitation of all who would serve the human family in its march from barbarism to a higher state of civilization. In my judgment there never was a band of reformers more unselfish, more consistent with their principles, more ardent in their devotion to any cause than were these early anti-slavery men and women of this country.

The charge is sometimes made that the colored people are ungrateful to their benefactors. In my judgment no charge could be more unjust. In whatever else they have failed,

they have ever shown a laudable sense of gratitude. The names of William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, John P. Hale, Charles Sumner, Gerrit Smith, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and a host of others are never pronounced by us but with sentiments of high appreciation and sincere gratitude.

Of course I cannot deny that there are those amongst us who, either thoughtlessly or selfishly, or both, dare to deny their obligations to the great Republican party and its leaders. They insist upon it that freedom came to them only as an act of military necessity. They see in it no sentiment of justice, no moral preference. They profess to see no difference between the Republican party and the Democratic party, and insist that one party has no more claim to their support than the other. Such men are about as ready to join one party as the other. Perhaps they even lean a little more to the Democratic than to the Republican party. I admit that were they fair representatives of the colored people of the United States the charge of ingratitude might be very easily sustained. But, happily, such men do not represent the sentiments of the colored people, but greatly and flagrantly misrepresent them. The colored people do see a difference between the two parties, as broad as the moral universe and as palpable as the difference between the character of Moses and that of Pharaoh. For one I never will forget that every concession of liberty made to the colored people of the United States has come to them through the action of the Republican party, and that all the opposition made to those concessions has come from the Democratic party. Any colored man who either denies this or endeavors to disparage that party and belittle their concessions by attributing them entirely to selfish and cowardly motives brands himself as unjust, uncharitable, and ungrateful. The blindness of such men is very surprising. Do they not see that in denying their obligations to the Republican party they only invite the scorn and contempt of the Democratic party? Do they not understand that they are advertising themselves as base political ingrates? Do they not know that they are giving notice to the Democratic party—the party that they are just now aiming to conciliate—that they will be as unjust and ungrateful to that party for any concessions from it as they declare themselves to be to the Republican party for what that party has done?

But, fellow-citizens, while I gratefully remember the important services of the Republican party in emancipating and enfranchising the colored people of the United States, I do not forget that the work of that party is most sadly incomplete. We are yet, as a people, only half free. The promise of liberty remains unfulfilled. We stand to-day only in the twilight of American liberty. The sunbeams of perfect day are still behind the mountains, and the mission of the Republican party will not be ended until the persons, the property, and the ballot of the colored man shall be as well protected in every State of the American Union as are such rights in the case of the white man. The Republican party is not perfect. It is cautious even to the point of timidity; but it is, nevertheless, the best political force and friend we have. ✓ compare to last speech

And now I return to the point at which I commenced these remarks. I have spoken to you of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States and of the national progress and prosperity under that instrument; I have called your attention to the noble objects announced in the preamble of the Constitution. I did not stop then and there to inquire how far those objects, so solemnly proclaimed to the world, and so often sworn to, have been attained, or to point out how far they have been practically disregarded and abandoned by the Government ordained to practically carry them out. I now undertake to say that neither the Constitution of 1789, nor the Constitution as amended since the war, is the law of the land. That Constitution has been slain in the house of its friends. So far as the colored people of the country are concerned, the Constitution is but a stupendous sham, a rope of sand, a Dead Sea apple, fair without and foul within, keeping the promise to the eye and breaking it to the heart. The Federal Government, so far as we are concerned, has abdicated its functions and abandoned the objects for which the Constitution was framed and adopted, and for this I arraign it at the bar of public opinion, both of our own country and that of the civilized world. I am here to tell the truth, and to tell it without fear or favor, and the truth is that neither the Republican party nor the Democratic party has yet complied with the solemn oath, taken by their respective representatives, to support the Constitution, and execute the laws enacted under its provisions. They have promised us law, and abandoned us to anarchy; they have promised protection, and ← compare to 1st speech

given us violence ; they have promised us fish, and given us a serpent. A vital and fundamental object which they have sworn to realize to the best of their ability, is the establishment of justice. This is one of the six fundamental objects for which the Constitution was ordained ; but when, where, and how has any attempt been made by the Federal Government to enforce or establish justice in any one of the late slave-holding States ? Has any one of our Republican Presidents, since Grant, earnestly endeavored to establish justice in the South ? According to the highest legal authorities, justice is the perpetual disposition to secure to every man, by due process of law, protection to his person, his property and his political rights. "Due process of law" has a definite and legal meaning. It means the right to be tried in open court by a jury of one's peers, and before an impartial judge. It means that the accused shall be brought face to face with his accusers ; that he shall be allowed to call witnesses in his defence, and that he shall have the assistance of counsel ; it means that, preceding his trial, he shall be safe in the custody of the Government, and that no harm shall come to him for any alleged offence till he is fairly tried, convicted, and sentenced by the court. This protection is given to the vilest white criminal in the land. He cannot be convicted while there is even a reasonable doubt in the minds of the jury as to his guilt. But to the colored man accused of crime in the Southern States, a different rule is almost everywhere applied. With him, to be accused is to be convicted. The court in which he is tried is a lynching mob. This mob takes the place of "due process of law," of judge, jury, witness, and counsel. It does not come to ascertain the guilt or innocence of the accused, but to hang, shoot, stab, burn, or whip him to death. Neither courts, jails, nor marshals are allowed to protect him. Every day brings us tidings of these outrages. I will not stop to detail individual instances. Their name is legion. Everybody knows that what I say is true, and that no power is employed by the Government to prevent this lawless violence. Yet our chief magistrates and other officers, Democratic and Republican, continue to go through the solemn mockery, the empty form of swearing by the name of Almighty God that they will execute the laws and the Constitution ; that they will establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity.

Only a few weeks ago, at Carrolton Court-house, Mississippi, in the absence of all political excitement, while the Government of the nation, as well as the government of the Southern States, was safely in the hands of the Democratic party ; when there was no pending election, and no pretence of a fear of possible negro supremacy, one hundred white citizens, on horseback, armed to the teeth, deliberately assembled and in cold blood opened a deadly fire upon a party of peaceable, unarmed colored men, killing eleven of them on the spot, and mortally wounding nine others, most of whom have since died. The sad thing is that, in the average American mind, horrors of this character have become so frequent since the slave-holding rebellion that they excite neither shame nor surprise ; neither pity for the slain, nor indignation for the slayers. It is the old story verified :

“ Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen ;
But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

It is said that those who live on the banks of Niagara neither hear its thunder nor shudder at its overwhelming power. In any other country such a frightful crime as the Carrolton massacre—in any other country than this a scream would have gone up from all quarters of the land for the arrest and punishment of these cold-blooded murderers. But alas ! nothing like this has happened here. We are used to the shedding of innocent blood, and the heart of this nation is torpid, if not dead, to the natural claims of justice and humanity where the victims are of the colored race. Where are the sworn ministers of the law ? Where are the guardians of public justice ?

Where are the defenders of the Constitution ? What hand in House or Senate ; what voice in court or Cabinet is uplifted to stay this tide of violence, blood, and barbarism ? Neither governors, presidents, nor statesmen have yet declared that these barbarities shall be stopped. On the contrary, they all confess themselves powerless to protect our class ; and thus you and I and all of us are struck down, and bloody treason flourishes over us. In view of this confessed impotency of the Government and this apparent insensibility of the nation to the claims of humanity, do you ask me why I expend my time and breath in denouncing these wholesale murders when there is no seeming prospect of a favorable re-

sponse? I answer in turn, how can you, how can any man with a heart in his breast do otherwise when, louder than the blood of Abel, the blood of his fellow-men cries from the ground?

“Shall tongues be mute when deeds are wrought
Which well might shame extremest hell?
Shall freeman lock the indignant thought?
Shall mercy's bosom cease to swell?
Shall honor bleed, shall truth succumb,
Shall pen, and press, and soul be dumb?
By all around, above, below,
Be ours the indignant answer, No !”

In a former address, delivered on the occasion of this anniversary, I was at the pains of showing that much of the crime attributed to colored people, and for which they were held responsible, imprisoned, and murdered, was, in fact, committed by white men disguised as negroes. I affirm that all presumptions in courts of law and in the community were against the negro, and that color was the safest disguise a white man could assume in which to commit crime; that all he had to do to commit the worst crimes with impunity was to blacken his face and take on the similitude of a negro, but even this disguise sometimes fails. Only a few days ago a Mr. J. H. Justice, an eminent citizen of Granger county, Tenn., attempted under this disguise to commit a cunningly devised robbery and have his offence fixed upon a negro. All worked well till a bullet brought him to the ground and a little soap and water was applied to his face, when he was found to be no negro at all, but a very respectable white citizen.

Dark, desperate, and forlorn as I have described the situation, the reality exceeds the description. In most of the Gulf States, and in some parts of the border States, I have sometimes thought that we should be about as well situated for the purposes of justice if there were no Constitution of the United States at all; as well off if there were no law or law-makers, no constables, no jails, no courts of justice, and we were left entirely without the pretence of legal protection, for we are now at the mercy of midnight raiders, assassins, and murderers, and we should only be in the same condition if these pretended safeguards were abandoned. They now only mock us. Other men are presumed to be innocent until they are proved guilty. We are presumed to be guilty until we are proved to be innocent.

The charge is often made that negroes are by nature the

criminal class of America ; that they furnish a larger proportion of petty thieves than any other class. I admit the charge, but deny that nature, race, or color has anything to do with the fact. Any other race with the same antecedents and the same condition would show a similar thieving propensity.

The American people have this lesson to learn : That where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe. I deny that nature has made the negro a thief or a burglar. Look at these black criminals, as they are brought into your police courts ; view and study their faces, their forms, and their features, as I have done for years as Marshal of this District, and you will see that their antecedents are written all over them. Two hundred and fifty years of grinding slavery has done its work upon them. They stand before you to-day physically and mentally maimed and mutilated men. Many of their mothers and grandmothers were lashed to agony before their birth by cruel overseers, and the children have inherited in their faces the anguish and resentment felt by their parents. Many of these poor creatures have not been free long enough to outgrow the marks of the lash on their backs, and the deeper marks on their souls. No, no ! It is not nature that has erred in making the negro. That shame rests with slavery. It has twisted his limbs, deformed his body, flattened his feet, and distorted his features, and made him, though black, no longer comely. In infancy he slept on the cold clay floor of his cabin, with quick circulation on one side, and tardy circulation on the other. So that he has grown up unequal, unsymmetrical, and is no longer a vertical, well-rounded man, in body or in mind. Time, education, and training will restore him to natural proportions, for, though bruised and blasted, he is yet a man.

The school of the negro since leaving slavery has not been much of an improvement on his former condition. Individuals of the race have here and there enjoyed large benefits from emancipation, and the result is seen in their conduct, but the mass have had their liberty coupled with hardships which tend strongly to keep them a dwarfed and miserable class. A man who labors ten hours a day with pickaxe, crowbar, and shovel, and has a family to support and house rent

to pay, and receives for his work but a dollar a day, and what is worse still, he is deprived of labor a large part of his time by reason of sickness and the weather, in his poverty, easily falls before the temptation to steal and rob. Hungry men will eat. Desperate men will commit crime. Outraged men will seek revenge. It is said to be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. I have sometimes thought it harder still for a poor man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Man is so constituted that if he cannot get a living honestly, he will get it dishonestly. "Skin for skin," as the devil said of Job. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Oppression makes even wise men mad and reckless; for illustration I pray look at East St. Louis.

In the Southern States to-day a landlord system is in operation which keeps the negroes of that section in rags and wretchedness, almost to the point of starvation. As a rule, this system puts it out of the power of the negro to own land. There is, to be sure, no law forbidding the selling of land to the colored people, but there is an understanding which has the full effect of law. That understanding is that the land must be kept in the hands of the old master class. The colored people can rent land, it is true, and many of them do rent many acres, and find themselves poorer at the end of the year than at the beginning, because they are charged more a year for rent per acre than the land would bring at auction sale. The landlord and tenant system of Ireland, which has conducted that country to the jaws of ruin, bad as it is, is not worse than that which prevails at this hour at the South, and yet the colored people of the South are constantly reproached for their poverty. They are asked to make bricks without straw. Their hands are tied, and they are asked to work. They are forced to be poor, and laughed at for their destitution.

I am speaking mainly to colored men to-night, but I want my words to find their way to the eyes, ears, heads and hearts of my white fellow-countrymen, hoping that some among them may be made to think, some hearts among them will be made to feel, and some of their number will be made to act. I appeal to our white fellow-countrymen. The power to protect is in their hands. This is and must be practically the white man's government. He has the numbers and the intelligence to control and direct. To him belongs the responsibility of its honor or dishonor, its glory or its shame, its salvation or its

ruin. If they can protect the rights of white men they can protect the rights of black men; if they can defend the rights of American citizens abroad they can defend them at home; if they can use the army to protect the rights of Chinamen, they can use the army to protect the rights of colored men. The only trouble is the will! the will! the will! Here, as elsewhere, "Where there is a will there is a way."

I have now said not all that could be said but enough to indicate the relations at present existing between the white and colored people of this country, especially the relations subsisting between the two classes of the late slaveholding States. Time would fail me to trace this relation in all its ramifications; but that labor is neither required by this audience nor by the country. The condition of the emancipated class is known alike to ourselves and to the Government, to pulpit and press, and to both of the great political parties. These have only to do their duty and all will be well.

One use of this annual celebration is to keep the subject of our grievances before the people and government, and to urge both to do their respective parts in the happy solution of the race problem. The weapons of our warfare for equal rights are not carnal but simple truth, addressed to the hearts and sense of justice of the American people. If this fails we are lost. We have no armies or generals, no swords or cannons to enforce our claims, and do not want any.

We are often asked with an air of reproach by white men at the North: "Why don't your people fight their way to the ballot-box?" The question adds insult to injury. Whom are we called upon to fight? They are the men who held this nation, with all its tremendous resources of men and money, at bay during four long and bloody years. Whom are we to fight? I answer, not a few midnight assassins, not the rabble mob, but trained armies, skilled generals of the Confederate army, and in the last resort we should have to meet the Federal army. Though that army cannot now be employed to defend the weak against the strong, means would certainly be found for its employment to protect the strong against the weak. In such a case insurrection would be madness.

But there is another remedy proposed. These people are advised to make an exodus to the Pacific slope. With the best intentions they are told of the fertility of the soil and salubrity of the climate. If they should tell the same as ex-

isting in the moon, the simple question, How shall they get there? would knock the life out of it at once. Without money, without friends, without knowledge, and only gaining enough by daily toil to keep them above the starvation point, where they are, how can such a people rise and cross the continent? The measure on its face is no remedy at all. Besides, who does not know that should these people ever attempt such an exodus, that they would be met with shot-guns at every cross-road. Who does not know that the white land-holders of the South would never consent to let that labor which alone gives value to their land march off without opposition? Who does not know that if the Federal Government is powerless to protect these people in staying that it would be equally powerless to protect them in going *en masse*? For one, I say away with such contrivances, such lame and impotent substitutes for the justice and protection due us. The first duty that the National Government owes to its citizens is protection.

While, however, I hold now, as I held years ago, that the South is the natural home of the colored race, and that there must the destiny of that race be mainly worked out, I still believe that means can be and ought to be adopted to assist in the emigration of such of their number as may wish to change their residence to parts of the country where their civil and political rights are better protected than at present they can be at the South.

I adopt the suggestion of the *National Republican*, of this city, that *diffusion* is the true policy for the colored people of the South. All, of course, cannot leave that section, and ought not; but some can, and the condition of those who must remain will be better because of those who go. Men, like trees, may be too thickly planted to thrive. If the labor market of Mississippi were to-day not over-loaded and over-supplied, the laborers would be more fully appreciated; but this work of diffusion and distribution cannot be carried on by the emancipated class alone. They need, and ought to have, the material aid of both white and colored people of the free states. A million of dollars devoted to this purpose would do more for the colored people of the South than the same amount expended in any other way. There is no degradation, no loss of self-respect, in asking this aid, considering the circumstances of these people. The white people of this nation owe them this help and a great deal more. The

keynote of the future should not be concentration, but diffusion—distribution. This may not be a remedy for all evils now uncured, but it certainly will be a help in the right direction.

A word now in respect of another remedy for the black man's ills. It calls itself independent political action. This has, during the past few years, been advocated with much zeal and spirit by several of our leading colored men, and also with much ability, though I am happy to say not with much success. First, their plan, if I understand it, is to separate the colored people of the country from the Republican party. This, with them, is the primary and essential condition of making the colored vote independent. Hence all their artillery is directed to making that party odious in the eyes of the colored voters. Colored men who adhere to the Republican party are vilified as slaves, office-seekers, serviles, "knuckle-close" Republicans, as tools of white men, traitors to their race, and much more of the same sort. Perhaps no one has been a more prominent target for such denunciation than your humble speaker.

Now, the position to which these gentlemen invite us is one of neutrality between the two great political parties, and to vote with either, or against either, according to the prevailing motive when the time for action shall arrive. In the interval we are to have no standing with either party, and have no active influence in shaping the policy of either, but we are to stand alone, and hold ourselves ready to serve one or to serve the other, or both, as we may incline at the moment.

With all respect to these political doctors, I must say that their remedy is no remedy at all. No man can serve two masters in politics any more than in religion. If there is one position in life more despicable in the eyes of man, and more condemned by nature than another, it is that of neutrality. Besides, if there is one thing more impossible than another, it is a position of perfect neutrality in politics. Our friends, Fortune, Downing, and others, flatter themselves that they have reached this perfection, but they are utterly mistaken. No man can read their utterances without seeing their animus of hate to the Republican party, and their preference for the Democratic party. The fault is not so much in their intention, as in their position. They can neither act with nor against the two parties impartially. They are

compelled by their position to either serve the one and oppose the other, and they cannot serve or oppose both alike. Independence, like neutrality, is also impossible. If the colored man does not depend upon the Republican party, he will depend upon the Democratic party, and if he does neither, he becomes a nonentity in American politics. But these gentlemen do, in effect, ask us to break down the power of the Republican party, when to do it is to put the Government in the hands of the Democratic party. Colored men are already in the Republican party, and to come out of it is to defeat it.

For one, I must say that the Democratic party has as yet given me no sufficient reasons for doing it any such service, nor has the Republican party sunk so low that I must abandon it for its great rival. With all its faults it is the best party now in existence. In it are the best elements of the American people, and if any good is to come to us politically it will be through that party.

I must cease to remember a great many things and must forget a great many things before I can counsel any man, colored or white, to join the Democratic party, or to occupy a position of neutrality between that party and the Republican party. Such a position of the colored people of this country will prove about as comfortable as between the upper and nether millstone. Those of our number now posing as Independents are doing better service to the Democratic party under the Independent mask than they could do if they came out honestly for the Democratic party.

I am charged with commending the inaugural address of President Cleveland. I am not ashamed of that charge. I said at the time that no better words for the colored citizen had dropped from the east portico of the Capitol since the days of Lincoln and Grant, and I say so still. I did not say, as my traducer lyingly asserts, that Mr. Cleveland said better words than Lincoln or Grant. But it would not have suited the man who left Washington with malice in his heart and falsehood in his throat to be more truthful in Petersburg than in Washington. This malcontent accuser seeks to make the impression that those who thought and spoke well of the inaugural address did so from selfish motives, and from a desire to get or retain office. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, the same shall be

measured to you again." He ought to remember, however, that a serpent without a fang, a scorpion without a sting, has no more ability to poison than a lie which has lost its ability to deceive has to injure. It so happens that we had two Presidents and one Vice-President prior to President Cleveland, and I challenge my ambitious and envious accuser to find any better word for the colored citizens of this country in the inaugural addresses of either than is found in the inaugural address of President Cleveland. I also beg my accuser to remember that I gave no pledge that Mr. Cleveland would be able to live up to the sentiments of that address, but, on the contrary, I doubted even the probability of his success in doing so. I gave him credit, however, for an honest purpose, and expressed a hope that he might be able to do as well and better than he promised. But I saw him in the rapids and predicted that they would be too strong for him. Did this look like seeking favor? He did a brave thing in removing from office an abettor of murder in Mississippi. He has expressed in a private way, to Messrs. Bruce and Lynch, his reprobation of the recent massacres at Carrollton, and for this we thank him. But he has done nothing in his position as Commander-in-chief of the army and navy to put a stop to such horrors. I am quite sure that he abhors violence and bloodshed. He has shown this in his publicly spoken words in behalf of persecuted and murdered Chinamen; he should do the same for the persecuted and murdered black citizens of Mississippi. He could threaten the law-breakers and murderers of the West with the sword of the nation, why not the South? If it was right to protect and defend the Chinese, why not the negro? If in the days of slavery the army could be used to hunt slaves, and suppress slave insurrections, why, in the days of liberty, may it not be used to enforce rights guaranteed by the Constitution? Alas! fellow-citizens, there is no right so neglected as the negro's right. There is no flesh so despised as the negro's flesh. There is no blood so cheap as the negro's blood. I have been saying these things to the American people for nearly fifty years. In the order of nature I cannot say them much longer; but, as was said by another, "though time himself should confront me, and shake his hoary locks at my persistence, I shall not cease while life is left me, and our wrongs are unredressed, to thus cry aloud and spare not."

Fellow-citizens, I am disappointed. The accession of the

Democratic party to power has not been followed by the results I expected. When the tiger has quenched his thirst in blood, and when the anaconda has swallowed his prey, they cease to pursue their trembling game and sink to rest; so I thought when the Democratic party came into power, when the solid South gave law to the land, when there could no longer be any pretence for the fear of negro ascendancy in the councils of the nation, persecution, violence, and murder would cease, and the negro would be left in peace; but the bloody scenes at Carrollton, and the daily reports of lynch law in the South, have destroyed this cherished hope and told me that the end of our sufferings is not yet.

But, fellow-citizens, I do not despair, and no power that I know of can make me despair of the ultimate triumph of justice and liberty in this country. I have seen too many abuses outgrown, too many evils removed, too many moral and physical improvements made, to doubt that the wheels of progress will still roll on. We have but to toil and trust, throw away whiskey and tobacco, improve the opportunities that we have, put away all extravagance, learn to live within our means, lay up our earnings, educate our children, live industrious and virtuous lives, establish a character for sobriety, punctuality, and general uprightness, and we shall raise up powerful friends who shall stand by us in our struggle for an equal chance in the race of life. The white people of this country are asleep, but not dead. In other days we had a potent voice in the Senate which awoke the nation.

Ireland now has an advocate in the British Senate who has arrested the eye and ear of the civilized world in championing the cause of Ireland. There is to-day in the American Senate an opportunity for an American Gladstone; one whose voice shall have power to awake this nation to the stupendous wrongs inflicted upon our newly-made citizens and move the Government to a vindication of our constitutional rights. We have in other days had a Sumner, a Wilson, a Chase, a Conkling, a Thaddeus Stevens, and a Morton. These did not exhaust the justice and humanity of American statesmanship. There is heart and eloquence still left in the councils of the nation, and these will, I trust, yet make themselves potent in having both the Constitution of 1789 and the Constitution with the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments made practically the law of the land for all the people thereof.



